

# *Library Trends*

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*Current Trends in  
Circulation Services*

WAYNE S. YENAWINE, *Issue Editor*

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July, 1957

# *Library Trends*

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# Library Trends

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## *Current Trends in Circulation Services*

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## *Introduction*

WAYNE S. YENAWINE

THE EDITORIAL BOARD of *Library Trends* exerts significant leadership in providing a medium for subjecting contemporary library practice and theory to critical review. This issue contains a symposium on the circulation function. The authors bring into sharp focus our methods and procedures for performing the circulation function and in a very real sense evaluate recent trends in circulation services. The papers do not represent a definitive coverage of the subject, but they do treat the subject comprehensively. Some of the authors raise provocative questions about the circulation process in relation to basic professional objectives.

The circulation function in libraries involves every user of library materials and the successful performance of the function is a measure of the effectiveness of all other duties to which librarians devote themselves. The best equipped library located in the most modern plant and staffed with the most capable librarians would be a mausoleum of recorded knowledge if the circulation function was omitted. The processes and services which result in bringing users and library materials into productive relationship is the circulation function in libraries. Obviously a library user must have access to material before he can make use of it at all, but given access, the library material must be what he needs before the relationship between user and material can be productive. The fact that a library user's request is fulfilled can be a sterile achievement unless at the same time he gets what he can use to personal advantage for his current need.

Today, the educational and recreational potentialities of libraries are greater than they have ever been. While libraries are stocked with literally millions of books and other resources, the ultimate goal—their use—is only partially achieved. A relatively small percentage of those who pay the bill use library material available to them. How

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do we know that the library materials made accessible to users, actually do make a desirable impact on the user? We don't know; and one of the reasons is that most of the reader service has been eliminated from the circulation function without compensating for the lost services in other ways.

In the pre-Civil War Library, the librarian, or some one working directly under his surveillance, determined from discussion with the borrower what was needed from the library collection, charged it to the borrower, and cleared the borrower when he returned the material. Circulation service was the sole reader service. Inherent in the situation was the opportunity for the librarian to know the borrower's need. The librarian also knew his resources, and was thus able to fulfill the need within the limits of materials available and of his own competence.

During the past one hundred years the concept of the circulation function has changed radically. Circulation services were first departmentalized and subsequently were decentralized. A de-emphasis of reader services, or an emphasis on the personal resourcefulness of the user, has occurred during a period when the sources of information in libraries increased enormously in quantity and form, but also during a period when the successful retrieval of information grew increasingly more dependent upon technical skill. In all sincerity and through a sense of obligation in a scientific age, librarians have used machines to replace critical manpower, speed up processes, and reduce unit costs. Faced with acute shortages of professional personnel, librarians have conscientiously replaced professional with clerical personnel in identifiable clerical operations. The circulation function was both favorably and adversely affected by progressive administrators. It is now symbolized by the charging machine, and the reader services, formerly an integral part of the circulation function, are gone. Most important is the loss of control over the effective use of library materials.

To reduce costs, librarians must be as realistic as any seller of services who understands that continuing an unwanted service, however cheap, is the surest way to bankruptcy. Libraries, of course, do not die in bankruptcy court, but the apathy of their constituents is worse than bankruptcy. Therefore the authors of these papers will achieve a useful purpose insofar as they assist the librarian in drawing a balance sheet on circulation services by which the gains are contrasted with the losses. The latter are problems only as long as they are allowed to

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limit the achievement of library objectives. Fortunately complacency among librarians is unusual. A great many librarians are earnestly and critically examining professional concepts in an effort to assess their contemporary relevancy and to clarify their fundamental values.



## A Reporter at Large

MARGERY CLOSEY QUIGLEY

A HALF CENTURY AGO library administrators with conscience and daring tore down the wrought iron grilles and wickets through which would-be borrowers had for years been pushing call slips and then waiting for the pages to make reports. Thus there was gradually brought into universal acceptance the policy of the open shelves which changed so wonderfully and forever the physical and mental life of the public library suppliant for books for home use.

In the early days of the liberalized public library which followed there evolved a system of records of loans, under the catch-title of the Newark Charging System, described on page 37, which eventually received wide adoption. It added to public library operation, and the circulation process in particular, a second principle about lending almost as revolutionary as that of the open shelves. It made clear that for the lending of public library books a process is essential, for businesslike control of records of "who borrows what," which could, if desired, be operated by "pages." At the same time the process would aim at increased convenience for the borrower.

A few lesser but significant policies involving the circulation process were subsequently accepted, before serious economic and social pressures dominated librarians' thinking. One of these is publicity, later public relations, or the obligation to interpret the public library's services and goals. Another is the search for opportunities for customer participation. The outstanding example of this latter policy is the old Detroit Charging System, which for young children still remains an extremely pleasing and useful educational experience. Another popular instance is that glorified gadget, the bookdrop, helpful inside or outside of the building, built into the facade or remotely set up. Other important developments with customer participation can come about almost immediately, if desired, through continuous affiliation with the local telephone company.

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In addition there has of necessity been recognized, though not as yet dramatically nor popularly because of present costs and bothersome details, the priceless principle of interlibrary cooperation. In the circulation process this principle is manifested severally as inter-branch loan, the universal borrower's card good within an entire library system, interlibrary loan by person, mail, telephone, messenger, or express; and the semi-permanent interlibrary borrower's card. The last, established through local agreements or legislation, has been most completely developed between English public libraries.

These gestures of cooperation, taken together, represent a potential in improved circulation service beyond the power of imagination. The prime result of present cooperation should be that those responsible for securing proper legislation and funds for regional libraries will be informed and ready when plans for regional public libraries come up for consideration.

Open shelves, business-like procedure akin to individual commercial charge accounts, publicity, customer participation, and interlibrary cooperation—the circulation process of today has inherited this series of obligations. They constitute five binding principles without which the lending of books by the publicly supported library would cease to fulfill one of the main purposes of a public library.<sup>1</sup> They have genuinely changed and enriched the circulation process. Despite this fact, the process itself is apt, in the modern library, to be the most uninspired, unprogressive and unrewarding of those services dealing directly with the public. In view of this, what principle can today's circulation process contribute in its turn? This writer suggests that a fresh conception which accepts clerical records and machines as essential, but which is distinguished by a primary concern with the borrower and his reactions to the library's books, could be this contribution. What parts of the circulation process by some sort of a fairly simple revision can be made to test out this formula for a fresh conception?

During recent years, with the assistance of business and industrial firms, there has been a continuous and intensive search for technical devices which might be injected with profit into the circulation process. Approximately a dozen such possible installations are on the market. With rising costs and the scarcity of personnel, librarians have been eager to test these devices as they appear.

From the pioneer, the electrically operated Gaylord Charging Machine on, each has used the basic idea of the Newark Charging System, that is, a mobile transaction card with a life span as long or

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as short as the borrower's cooperation. Each of the machines has proved effective when fitted carefully, through management techniques, into the individual setting, when operated properly, and controlled by, not controlling, staff assignments. Machine charging improves at once the relationship between the borrower and the desk assistant, by eliminating fatigue for the assistant, preventing numerous tensions common hitherto, and ending the bottlenecks of waiting lines.

As research continues other mechanical aids adaptable to library circulation processes may be expected. Machines now popular will be improved, even superseded. Coming models may easily be small, portable, relatively cheap, and thus useful in bookmobiles, rural stations, and other service points removed from the main charging desks. Many of the present files and other records on cards or in code will surely be by-passed.

The new contribution to the basic principles of circulation work should not, however, depend on the charging machines or the application of management engineering. Each of these blessings is really a set of business techniques successfully contributing to labor saving, time saving, and space making. Library administrators, resourceful and aware, welcome these obligatory improvements, so successful and so long desired. Nevertheless, they still must find additional professional library policies which will vitalize the present languishing circulation process as a whole.

The main trouble with the circulation process today even with charging machines, microfilms, and electronics is that, from registration on through the treatment of hopeless overdues, the process itself is not contemporary. In the eyes of many library users both the rules and the setting, including furniture, of his public library are out-of-date, comical, or provoking. Many of the findings and practices of other professions which deal constructively with human beings in like situations are not utilized appreciably. Therefore, the contemporary action, the possible fresh concept, recommended in this paper is concerned entirely with rapport. Its aim is to make the borrowing experience unhurried and sound, and to substitute a sense of "membership" for "getting a card."

In the last analysis the hard core of the circulation process in American public libraries is a true game of chance, and nothing more. The path of the so-called transaction, that is, the recording of each "who borrowed what" and the cancelling of the record of this individual loan when the book is returned, ends in what is fundamentally the

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principle of Lotto, or Bingo. This is the matching of a chance set of numbers against a master deck. It makes no difference whether the records of "who borrowed what" are made, as they are now, on cards, film, paper tape, wire, in punches, in code, in handwriting, by typewriter, slugs, metal plates, voice, or photography. It makes no real difference, either, whether the matching is done by electric impulses, as by collator or other matching machine, by a knitting needle, by arranging in a predetermined sequence and then extracting single returns by hand, or rapidly matched on a table top or through the use of lettered pigeon holes or ruled cloth or boards.

For that matter, on five minutes notice, given a typewriter or adding machine and a deck of prenumbered slips packaged in numerical order, anyone who knows how to operate either of these two common office appliances can set up and start immediate functioning of a neat, workable, labor saving system of charging by machine which observes all the necessary principles and can produce the answers about outs and overdues, and circulation totals for any month, week, day, or part of a day. At the end of a period of matching the library assistant has in her hands a bundle of unanalyzed information, which being interpreted is able to reveal the title of many a book once judged worthy of fusion with the library's permanent book collection and now too long absent. She also has the name and address, after another review of the situation, of each person who theoretically should now be served with a writ of some sort.

This is only a small start on the baffling problems which lie ahead of the captive Bingo-playing clerk and her colleagues, too, who must work upon the task of retrieving the volumes absent without leave. On the whole, the notices and the trivial authority available to these clerks are ineffective because these meager provisions are neither amiable nor psychologically sound. Also, the borrower's original signature and address are not necessarily trustworthy and may take patience to untangle.

In this interminable game as played in a public library, the library always loses. The better the library's book collection, the more frequent is the temptation to opportunist borrowers and in consequence the bigger the losses. Losses from hopeless overdues would represent a goodly sum if calculated in terms of replacement costs. It is safe to say that the whole procedure of sending out overdue notices needs livening diversification and advertising psychology applied to every step. In this problem, educational and social, is a large spot to which to shift an unhampered, practical, and somewhat humorous librarian

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who would cooperate steadily and constructively with social workers, teachers, police, collection agents, and public relations men.

At the other end of the hard core of the circulation process, that is, at the beginning of the transaction and a prerequisite to it, is registration, a process as dry and formal as the political connotation of the word itself. The approach recommended here is not much more than a simple shift, or interruption of a regular duty, for a professional worker who knows the content and style of many books. This library assistant, with rapport in her heart, a modified and salvaged form of readers' advisory service in her mind, and a fountain pen in her hand, would go not necessarily to a registration desk but to any pleasant, comfortable area where not a file, a stand-up counter, nor a desk is in sight, where she easily transmutes the brusque experience of 'getting a card' into a leisurely and personal discussion of book needs and tastes in reading, topped off by a short induction ceremony such as a guided tour of the public areas or the gift of a pertinent pamphlet.

The two-minute registration would probably change at most to a five or ten minute interview and tour. After all, until some startling library event occurs such as the opening of a neighborhood branch or a new main library building, the daily statistics of new registrations usually show an appallingly small number for the size of the community. All later experiences involved in borrowing books could be similarly improved by brief informal interviews with librarians who enjoy applying modern psychology, public relations, and their knowledge of book and reading habits.

There is now good reason, and in fact need, to make a larger initial investment in briefing and indoctrinating the beginning users of the public library, prolonging the time when the borrower feels free to discuss books and library service with "a real librarian," rather than to curtail the introductory interview and afterward to pay through the nose for the cut, by later frustrations and fewer repeat customers.

During the overlong years of testing and then acceptance of a very few liberal principles which will in all likelihood endure, certain specific traditional behaviors have continued. These might now be queried to advantage. In architecture today many old houses which were thought to be worse than useless have been reconstructed and made practical and pleasant for a specific family's daily use. At the same time surprising charm and personality have been added through original approaches to the problems. Likewise it has been proven possible in numerous recent jobs of drastic simplification of the circu-

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lation process to preserve a modicum of what might be dubbed the vested interests and come out with something like unto the old dominating concept, but much better. Modifications will certainly prove acceptable if they concern the library's present circulation statistics, which pile up with hardly ever a consultation in years because they preserve information which no longer makes the least bit of difference to the operation of the library. One great library does not bother with obtaining detailed circulation figures. We ponder on an investment in scales which, for example, counted precious ration coupons at a glance.

Other questionings which may lead to possible modifications, salvage and short cuts now unobserved are:

1. What records stemming from the circulation process already exist in another form in other records of the library, or of another community institution whose records are open to the library authorities by law, such as the delinquent tax records, the burial permits, and the permits to move the household goods out of the community, or in records open by courtesy or membership, such as the confidential central index of the clients of the local social agencies?
2. How may staff members become enthusiastic for, or even interested in, making more parts of the circulation process more personal, professional, and contemporary?
3. Has the standard suggestion box technique been put into effect to improve the situations connected with non-mechanical circulation procedures?
4. May the public often rightly consider the registration interview a travesty of business-like identification, or an insult to men and women equipped with the documents recognized by government agencies as valid identification?
5. Today with the "deskless executive office" popular in the public relations field, and with the search by therapists and psychologists for ways to make the handicapped comfortable, must the monolithic registration counter go on existing?

The circulation department has, in its location, area, personnel, and latent talents, furnishings, machines, layout, rules, traditions, supplies, and printing, variables good and bad which make it impossible to change into the likeness of some other, admirable library, but not impossible to make imaginative, purposeful, practical alterations. This is a challenge for the library staff—and, up to a point, for the Board of Trustees and the Friends of the Library. This is good fortune for

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the borrowers who on the whole like informality, cheerfulness, courtesy, style, comfort, and competence.

Fortunately also, outside pressure for better book borrowing service is already resulting from the phenomenal growth of population and massive shifting of family homes to open areas in suburbs or country. Regional libraries are bound to come soon, with pressure forcing interloan service to expand, improve and simplify its present routines.

How can one summarize in a pleasant and self-respecting cliché the contribution of a clean heart and a right spirit which any staff member may make toward strengthening the circulation process, so that those of the reading public who go through the membership interview will want to use the library again and again? Rapport, flexibility, the contemporary approach, individual prescriptions, personalizing—none of these words and phrases is normal and sincere enough. The nearest formula librarians have come up with as yet, to this author's way of thinking, is the descriptive phrase, "a public library for the whole family." In a stimulating book from England entitled *Reconstruction and the Home*, its architect author, Howard Robertson,<sup>2</sup> writes, "Finally, one would plead for a freedom to design with variety. . . . The age is inclined to be self-conscious; but, after all, one main function of domestic architecture is to make people happy, so designers need feel no great shame in frankly accepting that task, with all that it implies." Those public librarians who design staff policy for the circulation process likewise need feel no great shame in frankly accepting the task of making borrowers happy, with all that it implies.

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1. Leigh, R. D.: *The Public Library in the United States*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1950, p. 232.
2. Robertson, Howard: *Reconstruction and the Home*. London and New York, The Studio, 1947, p. 82.

## Administration of Circulation Services

PHILIP J. McNIFF

THE CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT's primary function is to supply the library user the books, pamphlets, serials, and other materials wanted. Jennie M. Flexner<sup>1</sup> reports that four major functions comprise circulation work: the staff must have a familiarity with the holdings of the library, a knowledge of the needs and interests of the users, an appreciation of the techniques employed in carrying out the service policies of the institution, and a willingness to cooperate with the other departments of the library.

In many respects, the circulation desk is the library's reception room as well as its book distribution and information center. Indeed the users frequently judge the library and its administration by the general atmosphere and level of service at the circulation desk. It is curious that, despite its nerve center role, the circulation desk has been accorded relatively little attention by writers on library techniques. The lack of information regarding the service requirements of students and faculty members in colleges and universities has been noted by L. W. Dunlap.<sup>2</sup> Circulation work is discussed in one chapter in G. R. Lyle,<sup>3</sup> while L. R. Wilson and M. F. Tauber<sup>4</sup> use a single section to treat reference, circulation, stack, extension, and other services. *Technical Services in Libraries*<sup>5</sup> devotes but three out of twenty-two chapters to circulation work.

The circulation department, being responsible for loan services, usually maintains a record of all loans, keeps a file of registered borrowers, provides machinery for the recall of overdue items and for reserving titles in demand, supervises the shelving of material in the stacks, and arranges extension, interlibrary, and public relations services.

The organization of the circulation department depends upon the size of the library, the scope of its work and the degree of departmentalization. Each type of library—public, college, university and special—has particular needs and the organization must reflect these

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needs. While every circulation department must be organized to give speedy and efficient service, this goal must be regarded as a means rather than an end in itself. In the college and university, the end is to advance the instructional and research programs; in the special library it is to further the successful operation of the business or profession; in the public library field:

- To facilitate informal self-education of all people in the community
- To enrich and further develop the subjects on which individuals are undertaking formal education
- To meet the informational needs of all
- To support the educational, civic, and cultural activities of groups and organizations
- To encourage wholesome recreation and constructive use of leisure time.\*

In small libraries all the administrative duties, including those of the circulation department, are assumed by the librarian. He selects and organizes the staff, establishes the policies, outlines procedures and routines, and supervises the work of the staff. In larger libraries a department head, responsible to the librarian, assumes these administrative duties. In the very large libraries the circulation chief may report to an assistant librarian or a division supervisor, representing the circulation staff in dealing with the public and with higher library authorities.

The traditional library, with its large central stack, has a central circulation desk which takes care of most circulation routines. The college or university library in this type of organization usually has supplementary service points including a periodical room, reserve desk, and departmental libraries. The large public library has its branches, deposit stations, and bookmobile service. The divisional type of library has major service posts in each division as well as a central loan desk for general circulation. Whatever the type of library there should be a centralized organization to provide uniform loan and public service practices in all parts of the library system.

The librarian in charge of the circulation department, no matter what the size or type of organization, must be aware of the latest ideas and techniques employed in this field. He must constantly examine the methods used in his own library, in relation to new developments and to the quality of service called for in his particular situation. Indeed the entire circulation staff should be encouraged

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to make recommendations for simplifying records and operations. The layout of the department—lighting, furniture, supplies, and equipment—will demand the attention of the department head.

Policies regarding service to users, including hours of opening, borrowers' privileges, interlibrary loan privileges, fines, lost books, and similar factors should be set down in writing. The department head should be thoroughly conversant with the basic aims of the library as well as with the community or institution it serves. Changes in methods or policies should be made with the help of the best advice within the department. At all times he must consider the effect of proposed changes on interdepartmental relations and on the basic aims of the library as a whole. Internal department rulings should be made after appropriate staff conferences, but changes affecting other departments or the library as a whole should not take place until there has been full discussion by all the staff members involved and until the new policies have been approved by the librarian.

While the importance of circulation work and its role in influencing the users' opinion regarding the quality of the library's service has been acknowledged by writers from Melvil Dewey<sup>7</sup> to Bernard Berelson,<sup>8</sup> there is need for the circulation chief to organize the work of the department so that the professional and clerical aspects of the work are kept separate. The routine work of charging and cancelling books, filing cards, shelving books, as well as the handling of reserves, overdues, and renewals can best be assigned to the clerical staff. The professional staff should be engaged in establishing policies, working with and advising the users, improving relations with the public or, in the case of the college or university, with the faculty and departments. The supervision of the staff and the maintenance of good interdepartmental relations within the library are key responsibilities of the professional worker.

The qualifications necessary for the department head and the other professional members of the staff will vary depending upon the size and type of library. Standards for college and university libraries are noted in *Classification and Pay Plans for Libraries in Institutions of Higher Education*.<sup>9</sup> The new public library guide sets forth principles and standards of service. The clerical and part-time workers of a loan department should be selected for their ability to get along with people as well as for their competence in performing the necessary routine tasks. The public relations function of people working at service points must constantly be kept in mind.

There should be active cooperation between the members of the

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circulation staff and the other units of the library system. Each person on the staff should be given an opportunity to get a good over-all picture of the workings of the entire library. A training program should be arranged to broaden the experience of the staff so as to insure maximum flexibility. Some libraries arrange for a regular interchange of staff between departments. Because the circulation staff represents the library to the users from whom it receives complaints and suggestions, it can be helpful to other units in the library's organization. In a well integrated library the members of the circulation staff will regularly lend assistance to the reference, acquisition, and catalog departments. Well-trained clerical and professional assistants can take care of the quick reference, informational, and directional service, thus relieving the reference staff so that it can devote its time to the more serious and time-consuming questions. Such cooperation will also eliminate to some degree the all-too-frequent complaints of library users who dislike being shunted back and forth between service units to get answers to simple requests.

The circulation department workers can assist the acquisition department by sending along promptly the titles of new books recommended by the borrowers. In the course of readers' advisory work, formal or informal, the circulation staff learns of new areas of subject interest which might not be covered adequately by the library's holdings. Prompt referral of these deficiencies to the acquisition staff and fast action in supplying these lacks result not only in good service but also in doing much to increase the library's prestige. In the public library field these requests can come from individual citizens, organized clubs, or from the needs of a vigorous adult education program. In the college and specialized libraries similar requests come from new course and research needs as well as from individuals.

The public service person is in a very good position to help the library to interpret the catalog. If the problems and difficulties encountered in the day-to-day use of this important bibliographical tool are passed along to the catalog department, adjustments and improvements can be made. An integrated approach to better service might well produce suggestions for new subject headings and references.

The chief administrator in the department must see that sufficient instruction is given to accomplish the tasks outlined above. The achieving of this goal requires a careful analysis not only of duties but of personnel if satisfactory assignments are to be made. Each new staff member must be given a clear understanding of working conditions, work week, weekly schedules, vacation and sick-leave benefits, regula-

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tions regarding time lost by tardiness and other causes, social security, and the availability of hospital and surgical benefit plans. The level of public service depends upon the punctuality of staff members and their careful carrying out of all assignments. Attendance records should be kept for tax as well as for administrative purposes. Staff morale will depend upon the fair and equal enforcement of all rules and regulations. Each employee should be made aware of the proper channels for making complaints and criticisms.

In addition to the initial instruction and in-service practice, the use of a staff manual is recommended. Here one finds outlined the circulation procedures, samples of all forms used, as well as a record of decisions made. Staff meetings should be held regularly to discuss problems and matters of policy. In larger libraries it might be desirable to have meetings of section heads in addition to meetings of the entire professional staff. Separate meetings of the clerical staff and of the section staffs can also be useful to administrators. In every size library, benefits can be derived from general meetings of the entire circulation staff especially if everyone is encouraged to comment freely.

Statistics play an important part in helping the administrator, governing board, or appropriating body to measure the success of the library. While librarians stress the fact that quantitative statistics of transactions, books, periodicals, records, and microfilms, tell only a partial story of circulation operations, nevertheless it is frequently the only method of demonstrating the library functioning to the general public. Regular review of the types of statistics kept should be made to ensure that they serve a clear and useful purpose. Spot checks can be made for information not needed regularly. In addition, libraries should be prepared to gather and report statistics on circulation services to recognized statistics gathering agencies.

Data recorded by the circulation department should include controlled studies to provide unit costs for the various activities in the department. For example in the college and university field one might want to know what it costs to circulate a reserve book; in another library the comparative costs of servicing different types of materials, books, periodicals, and recordings, could be found useful. Basic work statistics are useful in charting the flow of work; a word of caution is always in order regarding the danger of valuing statistics for their own sake, a costly and time-consuming occupation.

If comparatively little has been written about the circulation desk itself, less has been done concerning the role of the staff as public relations representatives for the library. Quite apart from the normal

courtesy, tact, and service, we must accept the fact that all library users are public relations conscious whether they are aware of it or not. A faintly cynical article, "Public Relations—the Invisible Sell"<sup>10</sup> should serve to remove the blinders from even the most naïve librarians. In the public service area the problems of overdue books, fines, lost books, and mutilation afford many opportunities for the staff to concern itself with the library's public relations. It requires patience, undoubtedly, to explain to the borrower that fines are not money-making schemes, that lost books must be replaced, that mutilation (if detected) is the equivalent of a lost book. It requires even more patience to explain to an interested borrower that his recommendation for a book must be denied. The careful explanation for the denial, whether verbally or in writing, is the library's responsibility to itself; a peremptory "no" is a loss in good public relations, a failure on the part of the library to make known its needs and its problems.

Fines are considered by some librarians as a source of income but generally the purpose of a fine system is to ensure the prompt return of books by the end of loan period. The non-return of books when due interferes with the right of other borrowers and results in a poorer level of service. There is no standard fine schedule in use in public libraries. A rate of from two to five cents per volume per day (holidays and Sundays generally excluded) has been generally adopted, and many libraries establish a maximum fine. Children are frequently assessed a smaller fine, and some communities have experimented with grace periods during which overdue books may be returned without penalty.

The administrator of the public service unit must have the training and experience necessary to evaluate the latest technical advances, to establish satisfactory policies for the use and the care of the book collections, and to select and supervise the staff required for this job. Above all he must have the ability to instill in his staff those qualities which make the library a dynamic institution. Much of his concern will involve him in the supervision of routine; it may be even more difficult for him to preserve his sense of the human equation. He would do well to remember that: "The only excuse for the perfection of routine processes is that they shall contribute to a fuller and better development of the library's essential services." This means not the custodianship of books nor the mere providing of books as they are wanted but also, as noted by Justin Winsor,<sup>11</sup> ". . . in inducing an improvement in the kind of reading."

## Administration of Circulation Services

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## Methods and Procedures

G. F. SHEPHERD, JR.

THIS CHAPTER will focus on methods and procedures of general circulation, registration of borrowers, use of restricted and non-book materials, and the status of centralized and decentralized lending centers, with an effort to survey briefly several types of libraries. Although there are many common denominators, one can hardly help being amazed at the extremes that exist in the kinds, sizes, and functions of libraries in the United States. While a casual and brief review of all libraries would show at least four common denominators: books, readers, staff, and service, to engage in a discussion of methods and procedures with several types of libraries in mind is somewhat like reading a dictionary. There is danger that the thread of thought might be snipped in too short a piece.

For many years most libraries have been penny-wise and pound-foolish, particularly in circulation procedures. The methods and procedures used have too often been complicated, devious, and difficult. Too often, procedures have been adhered to with the sole purpose of preventing some possible evil deed on the part of the reader; he might do this or that, out of line with accepted good practice. Thus it has been difficult to depart from custom and habit, and inertia has hindered a challenging inspection of outworn and obsolete routines. Countless operations have been performed the hard way under the assumption that thoroughness and accuracy could be achieved that way only, and as a result, the readers have often been dissatisfied with the service afforded them. Not enough attention has been given to the monetary cost of so much negative effort. The most books to the most readers at the least cost is a policy to which less lip service and more practical attention is given today.

The circulation function is being performed in all libraries with greater emphasis on simplified procedures for the borrower. Abusive readers will never be eliminated but neither are they increasing in proportion to "correct" readers. The citizen in the public library and

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the student in the college and university library rarely feels that he is "extracting" his books from the library. Rather, he may feel that it is difficult to escape from the library without having a book pushed at him.

In both public and college libraries, multitudes of records have diminished toward a minimum. The beauties and conveniences of airtight controls can no longer be justified on the use or cost basis. The irreducible minimum record in the public library is one enabling it to recall or reclaim books that are kept beyond reasonable time limits. Standing files for instant location of books not on the shelf are not considered as essential as they used to be, nor are files of charges standing by name of borrower.

Loan periods are being lengthened generally. This minimizes the importance of a date-due file and lessens the work load of writing overdue notices. One-month and longer periods, except for certain restricted materials, are being granted graduate students without noticeable difficulty. Longer loan periods are enjoyed by the reader with suitable safety to the library as long as satisfactory recall procedures are available. The home-use loan which was once granted to faculty only is now commonly extended to undergraduate students. It may be remembered that one Ivy League University library restricted loans to the faculty until shortly after 1900 and then cautiously extended the privilege to seniors. The success of complete openness clearly refutes past practices.

Further simplification, especially in the college and university library, has come with the elimination of the borrower's card. Rarely is the student reader put to any more trouble than that of signing his name to a card or slip containing highly abbreviated information about the book he wants. Occasionally for spot checking, or regularly at the reserve desk, he may have to show a student identification card or a treasurer's receipt.

Even though the borrower's card is still essential in the lending procedures of most public libraries, efforts are being made to shorten the time required to issue these cards in the first place, and furthermore, the internal library routines concerned with registration are being simplified. Considering the work load of registration in a large public library, one is not unsympathetic with the cries for short cuts and brevity. At the Queens Borough Public Library over 100,000 applicants are received and processed each year. Until the fall of 1954 a rather cumbersome and elaborate system of registration consumed the time of six staff members and still resulted in backlogs.

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Seeking a way out of the maze and backlog with a reorganization of procedures, the staff gave special study to the purpose of the registration file. Since its main function was to provide a means of contacting delinquent borrowers it was decided to maintain only a file of delinquents. This constituted the main point of a new procedure. The borrower now fills out a single application which is processed by Central Registration. The borrower is sent his card direct from Central Registration and his application card is returned to the branch where it is kept in a numerical file. All except the petty delinquencies are followed up by Central Registration. Bulky files have been reduced to ten per cent of their former size, and there has been a commensurate reduction in the staff time required to maintain the reduced records. The account of the procedure by Ann Convey and Andrew Geddes<sup>1</sup> merits following in complete detail.

According to Margaret H. Smith<sup>2</sup> we have an example of a very successful simplified registration system at the Whiting, Indiana, Public Library. A single application card is the only record required from a borrower. All the data needed is on the card, including name, number, date of expiration and date to which fee is paid for non-residents. Reregistration involves only the change of date; the same number being retained by the original recipient through the years. By giving each borrower's name a number from the Cutter-Sanborn tables it is possible to arrange the application cards alphabetically and at the same time numerically, thus eliminating the need for a second numerical file or registration book. When fees or fines are involved, a simple colored clip refers to a file of the pertinent records. The process of reregistration is simply a matter of revalidating the information on the original card and advancing the date three years. The incidence of transposed Cutter numbers is slight, and when it does happen, it is more easily traceable than it would be with regular serial numbers. As long as the files are not too voluminous, visible index panels can be used as further simplification. Even when used as a standing card file there is no difficulty. The system at Whiting, Indiana, would seem to be very satisfactory to the borrower, since he does not have to carry a card. The reader everywhere always appreciates the elimination of useless red tape.

The actual mechanics of the loan transaction has undergone a mild revolution in recent years. Every effort is made to deal with the reader quickly. Various streamlining devices are being incorporated into the charging routines. Photographic, mechanical, and marginal punched card charging systems have become widely used. The various me-

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chanical systems which use primarily a transaction number for each withdrawal are most adaptable in the public library where it is not critically necessary to have a file by call number for books out of the library. Adequate explanations of these and other systems designed to speed up loan record routines are given by M. F. Tauber<sup>3</sup> in his chapters on circulation in *Technical Services in Libraries*. Further comment on mechanical devices is given by another writer in the next chapter of this issue.

Upon reading the rules and regulations of public and academic libraries a few decades ago, it was quite common to see specific limitations on the number of books a reader might have out on loan at a given time. Except in areas where there may be acute shortages, little thought is now given to limitations. It is more often a matter of common sense and discretion. No supervisor in the fiction department of the public library will tolerate seeing a reader hoard the whole day's output of newly acquired popular titles; on the other hand the reader may be permitted to stagger out with a whole arm-load of nineteenth-century fiction. The academic library has also abandoned restrictions on the number of loans except for reserves and possibly a few other types of restricted materials. It is doubtful if the old-time restrictions could have been enforced unless the student was far less ingenious than he is today. Few record systems now provide the means to tell quickly how many books one individual may have.

In spite of the indicated trends toward more simplification and liberalization in loan procedures, nearly every library, public and academic, has a certain amount of restricted material to deal with. The application of the term "restricted" does not necessarily mean a conservative loan policy, and the term should not in any way connote censorship policies. In general, restricted materials fall in the following categories: reserved books, reference books, rare books, erotica and sex hygiene books, certain journals, and documents. The restriction observed is also a matter of degree and circumstance. What is necessary and suitable in the public library may not apply at all in the academic library and vice versa.

The term "reserved book" does not have the same meaning in the public library as it does in the college and university library. The public library uses the term to denote books for which there is a waiting list of borrowers. The term in the college and university library is usually applied to groups of books for assigned or required reading. The academic libraries commonly have two kinds of reserves, the closed and the open-shelf. The methods of handling reserves have

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changed little from those described by C. H. Brown and H. G. Bousfield<sup>4</sup> over twenty years ago. The same long cards for borrowers' signatures are used in the books and the same control records are kept. The principal changes seem to be in the de-emphasis of closed reserves and the greater use of open-shelf reserves. It is frequently necessary to advise the faculty member as to just what type of reserve procedure will best suit the needs of his students. He frequently overestimates the pressure on a given list of titles and wants them all on closed reserve. It has been demonstrated that if only the titles with real pressure on them are serviced from a closed area, the student's needs are better met. The titles that must be under the more stringent control of the closed reserve are most frequently arranged by author. This seems to provide the fastest operation for both the reader and staff. Those books under less pressure that are serviced on an open-shelf basis are most effectively arranged by course and within that group by author. The student encounters the minimum hindrance in perusing and selecting the titles he needs. In the open-shelf collection it is often useful to designate various loan periods according to the nature of the demands at various times during the term. A staff with whom the faculty cooperates fully is able to move certain titles to closed-shelf service during examination periods. Without proper warning of pressure on a particular title, trouble is apt to develop. An easy means of providing notice of the regulations and loan periods pertinent to any class of reserves is a simple strip fastened around the fore cover of the book on which is printed and stamped the pertinent information. A commonly used method of assuring compliance with reserve book regulations is to impose fairly heavy fines.

Reference books, though falling in the restricted category, are rarely within the province of the loan department, except perhaps in the smaller public library. If there is a formal reference department, loans of reference books are few and exceptional and are generally handled by that department.

To describe the methods and procedures applying to rare books from the smallest public library to the largest academic library means describing the procedure for handling perhaps a single shelf of books in the librarian's office, up to the larger operation of a rare book room containing many collections of rare books. At the lower end of this gamut, the circulation department may be responsible for the actual delivery of the book to the reader for use under supervision in the reading room. As we progress to a larger library, the circulation per-

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sonnel may be responsible for escorting the reader to some special nook or room, not yet large enough to have its own staff, where the rare books are kept and used. The routines for such limited operations are not complicated since there is seldom a loan outside the building. The important procedure is to secure clear identification of the reader and explain to him the proper safeguards in using the volume. It is interesting to note that at least one public library is liberal enough in its loan policy to allow cuneiform tablets to circulate. Emerson Greenaway, Director, Free Library of Philadelphia, mentions this in his discussion of the place of rare books in a public library.<sup>5</sup> The procedures in the large academic libraries rarely involve the circulation personnel at all. More often it is a matter of directing the reader to the rare book department or assisting him in finding a substitute edition that can be taken out of the building.

Nearly every library has something of a problem in circulating erotica and sex hygiene books. The library must not appear to act as a censor and yet it does have the responsibility of preserving such material for those who need it. The chief concern in all procedures is to establish clear identity of the borrower. The reader should be warned too that careless handling might cause the book to disappear into the hands of the curious. The novels of Henry Miller and similar works do not survive long in any library without restrictions on accessibility.

Even though every library may stoutly maintain that whatever it has is for use, it may mean use within the building. Fragile material and heavily used documents and journals may legitimately come under some restrictions. However, the general liberalization of lending practices has cut deeply into these classes of formerly restricted materials.

An increasing amount and variety of non-book materials constitute the resources of the public and academic libraries today. Recordings of music, poetry, speeches, talking-books for the blind, micro-texts, and picture collections introduce special methods and procedures. The special machines required for microfilm, microcard, and microprint eliminate those materials from use out of the building. Use in the building involves instruction in the use of the machine, provision for recording the use, and inspection of material for damage when the reader has finished. Music and other recordings, especially in the public library, circulate as book material. Special bags or envelopes are provided for safe carrying of records. Equipment requirements for special materials have been discussed by R. L. W. Collison, Refer-

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ence Librarian, City of Westminster, more adequately than is found in the American literature on the subject.<sup>6</sup> Public libraries which also serve school systems have considerable traffic in the picture collection. With protective envelopes the pictures are borrowed as freely as books.

The growth of city systems, county and regional systems, and the use of the bookmobile have created a great increase in the number of service points, and it is no longer possible to tell from a central point which book is in what individual's hands. The central library will know what block of books is on deposit at a given branch, but the record of lending of specific titles to individuals is kept on a local branch basis. It is not to be inferred that a reader is limited to any one unit of a system. He is normally accredited at all branches. In the rapidly increasing county and regional systems, the autonomy of the constituent units is almost completely preserved. However, a central authority plans and directs uniform methods and procedures.

Large academic libraries which have decentralized collections in a number of departmental libraries often operate with less uniformity in circulation procedures than the public library. The reading clientele of the various departments on a college or university campus differ widely in their needs and demands. The easy informality in a small mathematics library would not be acceptable in a large and busy engineering library. Self-service on the part of a small group of faculty and graduate students may be no handicap to efficiency whereas it could be utter confusion in a larger group. Granting loans for an indefinite period subject to recall is not an unusual policy in the small departmental library serving a research staff. The greater the number of readers, the more regularized are the procedures. Some variance in the lending methods and procedures is quite justified if we constantly remember that libraries are managed for readers and not just the librarians. In both public and academic systems of decentralized service, the circulation activity is generally directed from the central agency, and statistical reports are submitted to it.

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## The Collection

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BOTH USERS OF LIBRARIES and librarians are becoming increasingly aware of the multi-dimensional aspects of the problem of managing the library collection. There is a growing realization of the interaction of physical format, intellectual content, shelving, housing, and cooperation with other institutions—all factors in the availability of stored knowledge to the user. While we may still feel that the ideal situation is a shelf of books at arm's length from the reader, we are coming to accept the fact that this is no longer possible, for many reasons. We are trying a multitude of substitutes.

Many librarians, library board members, and educational administrators are concerned with the cost of service in dollars, but this writer believes that cost is one of the least of concerns. Categorically, the present society has the ability, and the essential need, to spend a far greater proportion of its income on libraries. The highways of knowledge are actually more fundamental and essential to modern civilization than are the vast ribbons of concrete for which we pay so large a proportion of our income. It is not meant to suggest that any librarian be wasteful with funds allotted to him, but rather to point out that he has a duty to society to maintain adequate service. Further references to costs in this paper will not be to over-all costs but simply to relative costs of various ways of achieving comparable results.

All the money in the world can not achieve the ideal for our reader and his shelf of books at arm's length. The reason is simple: his arm is too short, or the corpus of books he needs is far too great.

A synopsis of the history of library architecture shows a line of strategic retreats from the ideal shelf. The mediaeval and renaissance library, set up an alcove as a means of maintaining a maximum surface of exposure of books to readers. As floor area increased inordinately, balconies developed above. Finally the conventional pattern of the solid stack evolved. To reach a given group of books may require a

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journey from floor to floor and down long aisles, but upon arrival there every book is still in sight, ready to be plucked from the shelf.

Discarding duplicates or obsolete or little-used material, and squeezing bulky sets to microprint, is essentially cutting down on the length of the journey or trying to keep it from getting too much longer. Yet in discarding there is the risk of a much longer journey to get the discarded item elsewhere. In reducing to microprint, a reading machine is interposed between the reader and the read. Still, libraries believe that these compromises make for increased convenience for the average reader in the long run, and that frequently this ease of use is an economy in dollars.

In this setting some of the mitigatives and palliatives will be reviewed and compared. The field is so broad that this will be a report of general observations, stimulating discussion, and occasional flights of fancy, rather than an extended array of specific citations. The writer betrays his craft in stating that the *passaggio* of the Edgewater Beach Hotel is as good a place to get an over-all view of trends as the periodical indices.

The problem of library storage differs from commercial applications in two vital ways. Each library item is highly individualistic. It is not a standard part that can be stored in a bin with a dozen or a thousand others exactly alike. Nor does the library have a constantly changing inventory like a warehouse.

It is a standard convenience that each item in a library should be exposed to sight and instantly reachable without disturbing others. Lack of shelving has forced many compromises, such as turning books on their fore edges or piling them on their sides. Here the gain in shelf capacity may be as much as fifty per cent. It is simply the ratio of the height of the book to the width: if a book is nine inches high and six inches wide, it takes one and one-half times as much space to expose the spine as to expose the top or bottom edge. The possibilities of rearranging books by exact size, or even of cropping wide margins, have been thoroughly explored by Fremont Rider,<sup>1</sup> but the cost of the transfer, when equated to the cost of the space saved, offers little encouragement and few, if any, have adopted these proposals.

By modifying the usual floor plans, particularly by leaving narrower aisles, some increased saving in building costs may be achieved. However, long and narrow aisles involve difficulties in lighting, in using book trucks, and in getting books off the bottom shelves. Using wide shelves and putting on two rows of books can be done, and has been,

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but the exasperation of moving the outer row to get at the inner row is too great to overcome the substantial saving and building costs.

A modified form of double-shelving invented for libraries but eagerly promoted by refrigerator manufacturers, is the "shelvador." Here a second set of shelves swings like a door away from the inner set. The most recent large installation of this type is at the Midwest Inter-Library Center in Chicago. Whole tiers of shelves have been constructed compactly with no aisles between. Access to the books is by sliding the tiers out, one at a time, or by pushing them apart accordion-wise. The installation of "Compatus" shelves in the International Labor Office Library in Geneva, Switzerland, has proven entirely satisfactory.<sup>2</sup> Ingenious as these space-saving inventions have been, however, the mechanical provisions for moveable shelves are necessarily expensive, and in some instances the effort to move the shelves frustrating. The latest form of compact shelving, and one which seems to be potentially more popular, resembles a series of skeleton file drawers. Here the effort to move the unwanted books to get at the wanted ones is much reduced. Also the file drawer type of suspension is a well-tried and familiar mechanism in libraries.

In further description of the economy of this type of shelving, but primarily as illustrative examples of how figures can be developed which will help in making administrative decisions, a few exercises in arithmetic are pertinent. For the sake of simplicity, the computations will be based on use of the "compo" shelving manufactured by the Hamilton Company of Two Rivers, Wisconsin. The same techniques can be applied to other makes. The writer has had considerable experience with this type of shelving, and believes that it has great potentialities. Certainly it is already gaining wider acceptance than any of the other forms.

In standard stack construction a square foot of floor space or eight cubic feet of building, contain roughly about two linear feet of shelving. The *compo* carries about twice as much, or four linear feet. Assuming the cost of standard stack is three dollars per foot and that of *compo* is five dollars per foot, then the *compo* costs two dollars per foot more.

But if the building costs \$1.50 per cubic foot, the actual ultimate capacity cost is lower when the *compo* is used, for 10,000 linear feet of standard shelving will cost \$30,000 and the space to house it will cost \$60,000, a total of \$90,000. The same 10,000 feet of *compo* shelving will cost \$50,000, and the space to house it will cost half as much, or \$30,000, for the total of \$80,000, a saving of \$10,000. In view of the

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fact that only one-fourth as much lighting and finished floor are required in the latter situation, the initial construction cost is actually even lower. Over the years there will be savings on maintenance.

If the building cost is \$2.50 per cubic foot (not unusual for a monumental building), the cost of building plus compo shelving is less than the building cost alone for standard shelving. In recent construction of an annex at the St. Louis, Missouri, Public Library, plans were changed from a two-story standard stack to a one-story compo stack of the same capacity, with the result of a total over-all saving of one-third.

Between World War I and World War II, the library stack was viewed and constructed as an isolated unit. The relationship of books and readers was figuratively, and often literally, on the hour-glass pattern, the loan desk being the narrow neck connecting the two. The gradual relaxation of closed stack restrictions and the realization that greater ease of contact between book and reader is desirable, have widened this neck or eliminated it. A most dramatic example of this change is the Lamont Library at Harvard where the readers actually filter through the shelves on their way to their seats.

Some buildings have been constructed on the so-called modular plan for the purpose of making stack, office, and seating space virtually interchangeable. There are some economies in solid slab stack floors as compared with the old open decks. But many contend that the modular plan, in trying to serve two different purposes, serves neither very well.

Despite much discussion and two outstanding examples, such as the New England Deposit Library and the Midwest Inter-Library Center, librarians and their trustees have made remarkably little progress in cooperative attack upon the problem of growing collections. The Midwest Inter-Library Center has gone farther in eliminating duplication, and especially in promoting a cooperative program of acquisition. It can not be said to have saved the participating libraries considerable sums. It simply provides access to much more material than any of them individually could afford. The Hampshire Inter-Library Center is on a more modest and restricted basis, but is successful in the same ways.

The New York State Library is expanding its already extensive service to other libraries. It is unique in the extent to which its primary responsibility is to serve college, public, and special libraries through loan of expensive, rare, and infrequently used materials. The New York service is frankly regarded as one form of state subsidy. Local

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libraries are encouraged to discard little used material with the assurance that when needed such can be secured from Albany. In the field of United States government depository documents, the Wisconsin Historical Society and the New York State Library have taken the initiative in developing a program of discarding, redistribution, and rationalization. The reluctance of librarians to give their programs and collections thorough overhaulings, seems to be based on two difficulties: (1) inability to determine what titles or groups are not likely to be in demand, and (2) awareness of delays and difficulties in securing material by loan.

The deterioration of the federal postal service has struck an intangible but nonetheless grievous blow at interlibrary lending. Yet the best postal service in the world will not bring the book in the cooperative center immediately through space to the reader's shelf at arm's length. To meet this situation, the writer once proposed a pneumatic tube system between various libraries in New York City. In the great libraries of New York City there are literally millions of books so infrequently used that one copy would be enough to serve all if it could be available in a few minutes. These books are now present in several or even dozens of copies. All of the extra copies are kept to meet the time and space factor.

On the horizon is the development of facsimile transmission. A network of facsimile transmission apparatus could mean instant availability, and cheap duplication, revolutionizing all the collecting policies. Experimental work has been conducted at the Library of Congress, but success is still in the future. Although the librarian can not protect himself and his readers with facsimile transmission or with very prompt delivery from other sources, he does have ways of determining what books are most likely to be asked for and what will be infrequently demanded. He can calculate his risk. Clearly no library can ever contain everything that is likely to be requested. Indeed the latter steps toward that unattainable perfection are exceedingly expensive.

There are many ways of developing gross differentiation between heavy and light use. Books in the native language come first, familiar foreign languages next, and exotic languages last. For example, the New York State Library Extension Division has published a list of criteria and some specific titles for discarding by public libraries.<sup>3</sup> The most tangible figures on demand can be determined by use of the date of publication. The present writer developed a formula for college library collections.<sup>4</sup>

R. H. Parker, Librarian of the University of Missouri, has made a

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significant study, as yet unpublished, of his collection and its future development. He reports that ninety-four per cent of the demand is for books less than fifty years old. The effective life of periodicals is much shorter, especially in the fields of science. This suggests that for all but a few well-known classics, it is uneconomical (or at least inordinately expensive) to acquire or even retain material over fifty years old, especially if the five or six per cent need can be satisfied through some cooperative system. A central depository serving the marginal demands of many institutions, would itself experience a much higher demand of the older materials.

The possibilities of microprint as a solution to storage problems, have been much touted in recent years. Many librarians are coming to a realization, however, that microfilm and microcards are an economical form of duplication, preservation, and publication—hence of acquisition—but not a cheap way to save space. Several years ago a representative of the administrative management unit of the New York State Budget Division, made a study of the cost of converting a group of newspapers to microfilm. The cost turned out to be sixteen dollars a cubic foot for space recovered—over ten times the cost of building new space.

Books are essentially handy packages of information. Magazines and pamphlets are slight variants in format. While the mechanical age has brought better ways of making books, it has also brought new types of packages which may be better than books. For many subjects, a moving-picture film or sound recording is a far more effective medium or package of information than the printed page. Because these media are new, librarians will treat them as gadgets. Spear<sup>5</sup> has well stated the case for them as "archives." Recognition of them as everyday reference material may be slow in coming, but it is inevitable.

What of the reader who comes into the library wanting to study Navaho Indian sand-painting? Are there any really good books on the subject? Can the fleeting color and motion ever be put into a book? They can be seen in a film. Must the reader wait for a "film program" and an audience of a hundred others to see the film? Such a need should rather be met as forthrightly as a request for a microfilm, and the individual permitted to view the film by himself, with no greater ceremony than he would use an equally expensive reference book.

Surely librarians are ready to meet the new challenge of discharging their duty to society in terms not of physical format but of intellectual and informational content. The new technology of this age is giving

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them many fascinating new tools to break the barriers between the person who wants to know and the sources of knowledge.

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## Adaptation of Machines to Book Charging

RALPH H. PARKER

RECORDS OF BOOKS on loan from a library are essentially simple, consisting of an identification of the book, the borrower, the date borrowed and the date due, and in large systems the unit from which borrowed. Compared to the number of transactions recorded in other fields they bulk quite large. The inherent simplicity of the record and the low cost of hand maintenance limits the need and opportunity for mechanical operations. Only in the past quarter century has there been a significant trend toward mechanization of charging methods. The earlier experiments and discussions had centered on the definition of purposes of circulation records; answers have never been found to satisfy all librarians.

Prior to 1876, when the formation of the American Library Association gave a forum for discussion, each library followed its own methods with little opportunity for exchange of ideas. Actually, the size of libraries and the volume of circulation were so small that in many libraries the most informal systems would suffice. Some librarians treated their loans in the manner of accounts using double entry bookkeeping systems, others preferred a single entry system, while still others used only blank slips of paper on which were noted the books issued to a borrower. There was, however, much objection to any record system not kept in a book, the same objection raised by accountants of the time. The danger of loss, theft, or misplacement of a separate piece of paper weighed more heavily in the library mind than the convenience, speed and flexibility of a slip record.

From 1876 forward, the *Library Journal* gave an opportunity for the exchange of ideas, and during its first years of existence, many articles and letters appeared in discussion of circulation record systems. In fact the quarter-century from 1876 to 1900 might be described as a period of experimentation and cross fertilization of ideas. As this interchange progressed, there began the quest for a "perfect" system. In 1880 Jacob Schwartz<sup>1</sup> described as perfect a system which would

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show: (1) where every book is that is absent from the shelf, how often every book has been issued, and the character of each day's issue; (2) the number of books taken out by each reader, with dates of issue and return, and should provide the reader with indication of dates due and with receipts for return of books; (3) the number of books issued each day, and the books overdue each day, so that notices may be sent.

Perhaps in the minds of many librarians this perfect system was represented by counterparts in accounting: a journal or daybook recording transactions in sequence, a ledger recording books issued to each borrower, and a ledger recording the borrowers of each book.<sup>2</sup> Even with small circulations, this "ideal" system was difficult to maintain; aside from the cost, it entailed waiting by borrowers to have their loans recorded.

It was only a natural development to combine features of the slip systems and the ledger systems to form card systems. Many card systems were originally merely separate ledger sheets similar to those previously used in bound volumes. One early card system consisted of a file of cards for each volume, kept in book number sequence until a volume was issued when the card was transferred to a date file.<sup>3</sup>

The importance attached to limiting the number of books which a borrower might have at one time hampered the development of an expeditious system. The borrower ledger was in time transferred to the borrower's custody in the form of the borrower's card on which was recorded the books on loan. The filing and finding time of maintaining the borrower ledger was eliminated, and the borrower was provided a record of his loans and a receipt for their return. But the system was slow both in the issue and in the return of a book.

One system proposed in 1895 by Nina E. Brown, Librarian of the Library Bureau, and which was rather widely adopted in the next five years, employed a borrower envelope (or pocket) rather than a card. In this system each borrower was issued the number of envelopes (or pockets) equal to the number of volumes he could have on loan at one time. To issue a book, the library attendant inserted the book card into the envelope of the borrower; the card projected above the top of the envelope and could be filed by call number behind a date guide.<sup>4</sup> There was thus no writing of borrower number on the book card nor of book number on the borrower card; there was adequate date and borrower control, and fair book control.

By 1900 librarians seem to have found satisfactory substitutes for the perfect system. About that time the Newark system was unveiled,

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and in time it became the standard for public libraries.<sup>5</sup> A single book card, now standardized at three inches by five inches, and capable of recording some fifty loans, was the basis. Cards for books on the shelf were kept in the book pocket; for books on loan in files by call number under each due date. Each borrower also carried a card of the same size. Each transaction was recorded by a library attendant's writing the borrower's registration number on the next line of the book card; by stamping the date due on the same line of the book card, on the next blank line of a date due slip in the book, and on the next blank line of the borrower's card. Cancellation of the charge was effected by stamping the return date opposite the due date on the borrower's card in the book pocket, and by returning the book card from the file to the book.

All superfluous information had been eliminated from previous systems. Date control was effectively achieved; borrower control was good, even if subject to some error, and book control fair, requiring search through some fifteen separate files to locate any specific item.

In college and university libraries, where better book control was considered essential, and where closed stacks were the rule, a double charge system became the standard at about the same time. A book card filed by call number, and a call slip filed by date constituted the record.<sup>6</sup>

During this experimental period the contest between bound volume circulation records and slip or card records had been decided, but the contest had not been limited to these two systems alone. Some, which were tried and stoutly defended, appear to us now as odd and even inconceivable. One type proposed and used mostly in England was known as the Indicator system, of which there were numerous adaptations. One of the most interesting, perhaps, was the Leeds Indicator,<sup>7</sup> which involved use of banks of very small pigeon holes, one-third inch high by two and three-fourths inches wide, and three inches deep. The front of this unit was covered by a glass door, and was similar to post office boxes. Each book in the library was assigned a separate pigeon hole; each borrower carried a card which entitled him to one book at a time. When a book was issued, his card was inserted into the pigeon hole for that book. Thus safe from pilferage through the glass, the record of the book was visible to the library attendant. And to other borrowers too, who did not need to ask the librarian if the book was in!

In another indicator system, the shelf-list was on shipping tags, strung on a wire above the charging desk.<sup>8</sup> Each tag was also im-

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printed with consecutive numbers from one to ten; when a book was issued the lowest odd number was punched out with a conductor's punch; when returned, the lowest even number. Thus the library attendant and the customer could consult the "tag indicator" with ease.

Even in 1880 the daybook record had long since given way to the ledger because it became increasingly difficult with larger circulations to find the original entry for cancellation when the book was returned. Although the idea was to lie dormant for another half-century, a significant contribution using the daybook system was made in 1886 by W. K. Stetson.<sup>9</sup> In this system each loan was recorded in sequence in a daybook, each page and line of which was numbered. At the time of issue this number was written on the borrower's card which was inserted in the book, thus providing an index to the record to facilitate cancellation at the time of return.

After 1900 charging procedures receded from the focus of attention for a quarter-century; but changing conditions, especially the increase in size of libraries and library circulation, eventually led to concern with the cost of circulation records. These first rumblings did not involve mechanization, but reflected the trend in grocery stores to self-service. The Detroit Self-Charge system, introduced in 1929, was essentially the Newark system with the borrower writing his own number on the book card,<sup>10</sup> and was a reaction against mechanization. Incidentally, the borrower card was reduced to the status of identification card and the limit on number of books to a borrower disappeared.

It was only at this point that the mechanization of charging books began. The Dickman book charging machine, first used in 1927 in the Washington, D.C., Public Library, made possible the mechanical imprinting of borrower number and date due on the book card.<sup>11</sup> Otherwise the Newark or Detroit system was left untouched. An improvement occurred in 1931 in the Gaylord machine, which accomplished the same end but more readily. With the Dickman machine the card had to be hand placed, so that imprinting would occur in the next blank position; with the Gaylord machine this became automatic.

There was extensive adoption of these machines in public libraries, but only a scant reception in college libraries. The necessity of a double charge limited the advantages of the machines over the system already in use. The first change of significance in college and university library methods was in the adoption of a punched card call slip at the University of Texas in 1936.<sup>12</sup> With punched card machines it

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became possible to maintain, with a single card file, control by book, borrower, and date. According to Helen Geer<sup>13</sup> this was the first record of a library's achieving multi-dimensional control from a single record.

This system was soon followed by similar adaptations using other mechanical devices. A McBee Keysort system, using marginal notched cards, was introduced at Harvard University in 1938.<sup>14</sup> A tab card system at North Carolina Women's College in 1939 achieved date control by use of vari-colored call cards, with tabs in different positions to indicate dates due.<sup>15</sup> Home made adaptation of the marginal punched card have been installed in a number of institutions.

The next step in mechanization occurred in 1940 when photo-charging was introduced in the Gary Public Library.<sup>16</sup> In this system, of which a number of variations developed, the record of the loan consisting of a transaction number, the book identification, and the borrower identification is photographed on a roll of film or paper. A numbered transaction card placed in the book is the index to the record which permits easy cancellation of the record. Basically, this procedure is simply a mechanization of the indexed daybook system introduced by Stetson in 1886, with a roll of film replacing the hand-written daybook. Library thinking on the purpose of charge records had gone full circle; book and borrower controls were dropped.

Having accepted the limitations of the system as immaterial, other librarians began making adaptations and improvements. First, a library used the call slip instead of the photographed record; then other libraries experimented with audio-charge, using an office dictating machine instead of a camera. A machine was developed for making the photographic record in reduced size, yet readable without enlargement.

The next step was, quite naturally, the use of punched cards for the numbered transaction cards.<sup>17</sup> By this means the photographed or audio record of the loan was indexed for mechanical arrangement, cancellation of returned loans, and identification of overdue loans.

If there has been a trend in this second great period of experimentation, it has been to a punched, notched, or tabbed call slip (actually a card) in college and university libraries, and to a transaction card (with photo, audio, or hand-written record) in public libraries. Neither of these systems is yet the "perfect" system. With punched call cards, there is relatively adequate control on all three facets; but the preparation and cancellation of the record are far from automatic. The transaction card system, with punched transaction cards, is as nearly com-

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pletely automatic as can be conceived at present. The record is mechanically made, there is no filing, the cancellation of the record is completely mechanized. But control of borrower and book is entirely abandoned.

A system, which combines the complete control envisaged in the "perfect" system, with completely mechanized preparation and cancellation of the record, has never been offered to the public, but a trial installation made in the Montclair Public Library in 1941<sup>18</sup> is still in use. For two reasons it will probably never be widely used: first, the expense involved in the preparation of a punched identification card for each book; and second, the fact that it is feasible only in large units, and not in small branches.

While the Montclair system may never be extended, there is no reason to believe that further automation will not take place. A new piece of equipment, known as the Transceiver, may make possible recording of loans in a central office from any lending unit in a library on perforated or magnetic tape. Random access electronic machines, which eliminate the need for arrangement of records to obtain control of any element (such as the number of books on loan to any borrower), are already in existence and are capable of more automation of charging procedures than can be readily conceived. But use of them for this purpose would be like sending a jet-powered strato-cruiser to deliver a prescription across town. Even the smallest of the general purpose computers now available cost in the neighborhood of \$25,000 per year in rental, not including the personnel to operate it.

In this, as in so many other cases, libraries must await the construction of machines for other purposes which will be adaptable to circulation uses. The day may well come, however, when new machines will provide the perfect charging system: economical, complete, and without delays.

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## Personnel in Circulation Service

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**THE STAFFING OF A LIBRARY** circulation department calls for a clear understanding of the department's role in serving the public and an awareness of the component skills required to provide this service. Personnel planning is complicated by the fact that circulation operations generally embrace three categories or levels of work—clerical, managerial, and professional—and many of the tasks are difficult to segregate and classify. For years librarians have been attempting to arrive at a better distribution between professional and nonprofessional work, realizing the adverse effect on morale as well as on operating efficiency when professionally trained persons spend their time doing clerical work. These efforts have been stimulated in recent years by increased demands for service coupled with rising costs and a shortage of professional librarians.

The basic components of circulation work—fetching a book from the shelves, charging it to a patron, discharging and shelving it when the book is returned—are clerical in nature. But when these tasks are performed hundreds and thousands of times a day and by numerous persons, they present certain organizational problems. Such problems with respect to books, records, and people call for managerial and supervisory skills, but not necessarily the attention of professional librarians. It is in the peripheral areas of circulation work that professional training and experience may be needed. At some point circulation work may cease to be routine and will call for bibliographical knowledge or professional judgment.

While it is clear that the backstage work of record-keeping can best be done by clerks, and fetching and shelving can best be done by student help, considerable difference of opinion exists as to who shall meet the public at the loan desk. Jennie M. Flexner, writing about public library circulation work in a day (1927) when professional training was less frequently required than it is today, stressed the importance of a professional attitude in all dealings with the public.<sup>1</sup>

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She listed twenty-three personality traits desirable for all circulation assistants, whether or not they were library school graduates. A good personality, no less than book knowledge and professional training, was deemed a requisite for contacts at the public library circulation desk.

C. H. Brown and H. G. Bousfield recommended in 1933 that all contacts with patrons in a college and university library be handled by professionally trained librarians.<sup>2</sup> In some libraries professionals are prevented from doing clerical work at the circulation desk and clerks are prevented from dealing with the public by the simple device of placing all record-keeping behind the scenes. Besides improving the efficiency of the circulation operation, such a plan has the advantage of elevating the professional librarian in the eyes of the patron, who too often thinks of a librarian as one who potters with cards while the patron waits for his book.

E. W. McDiarmid, speaking at a University of Chicago Library Institute in 1948, doubted that all public contacts at the circulation desk need to be handled by a professional.<sup>3</sup> Many contacts, he stated, are clerical, involving questions as to the location of various units of the library, the mechanics of the card catalog, and library rules and regulations. In the interest of efficiency and economy we should give up the idea of providing experts for every public contact. To perform the large body of library work which requires somewhat less than professional training and somewhat more than clerical, McDiarmid proposed a third category of library personnel—the library technician. Such an employee should have a good general education, should be trained in library methods, and be capable of performing supervisory assignments. While there has been general recognition of the usefulness of the library technician, there has not been agreement as to where and how he should be trained. McDiarmid suggested that library schools accept this responsibility, but these institutions have been more inclined to view the job as in-service training for promising clerks. Alice I. Bryan recognized the existence of a sizeable group of such subprofessional employees in her survey of personnel in public libraries.<sup>4</sup>

The rearrangement of service within the circulation department is one method of assuring that clerical, managerial, and professional work is done at the lowest level consistent with efficiency. More fundamental, however, is an examination of the over-all public service activities in the library with a view to discovering new patterns of organization. For example, in a public or university library that is

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organized into subject reading rooms, professional assistance to readers may be handled by departmental or divisional librarians. Circulation is then left with only a clerical operation: the charge-out function at the exit and the maintenance of the stacks. The amount of bibliographical assistance that is required at the loan desk will also be affected by the quality of the public catalog, the percentage of books on open shelves and thus readily available to the patron, the presence of an information assistant at the catalog, and, in the case of the college and university library, the amount of formal training in the use of the library.

Much of the writing about organization of circulation services has been based on supposition and general observation rather than on any scientific analysis of the work performed, its characteristics, its flow, and the quantity in a given library. Such a systematic self-survey will not only indicate ways of streamlining circulation procedures but will serve as a necessary first step in classifying the positions in the department. Herbert Goldhor<sup>6</sup> and R. H. Logsdon<sup>6</sup> review the growing body of literature on work simplification in a recent issue of *Library Trends*. In an effort to assist librarians in conducting a work analysis, the American Library Association's Board on Personnel Administration prepared a list of typical professional and nonprofessional duties performed in libraries.<sup>7</sup> Circulation work is described in this list under these categories: (1) registration and circulation, (2) care of shelves and files, and (3) assistance to readers. The circulation department of a large library will find it easier to avoid the hybrid professional-clerical position by reassignment of duties than will the small library where volume of work does not permit specialization. But even the small library, as evidenced by the writer's own experience, may benefit from a work simplification study.

The formulation of a position classification scheme for the circulation department is a logical outgrowth of the work analysis of the department; in fact, an analysis of the tasks to be done must precede a description of the people needed to perform them. A good position classification plan, according to Miss Bryan, "provides an inventory of the personnel necessary for the operation of the organization as a whole; it differentiates the various levels and types of positions and indicates their functional relationships; it provides the basis for setting up specifications for the selection of properly qualified employees; and it defines the lines of employee promotion."<sup>8</sup> It is to be expected that a work analysis of the circulation department and the position classifi-

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cations that follow would be part of an over-all personnel program for the library. Assistance in developing a position classification plan and an accompanying salary schedule is provided in an A.L.A. manual<sup>8</sup> and in a set of sample plans appropriate to various types of libraries.<sup>9, 10</sup>

As a by-product of work analysis and position classification it might be useful for the circulation department to determine performance standards for individual jobs—the amount of time spent on a task or the amount of work to be done in a given time. Quantitative standards, of course, are more applicable to such clerical and routine jobs as shelving, filing, slipping, and reading of shelves than to reader services. Ralph Shaw refers briefly to a program for establishing performance standards in book charging at the U. S. Department of Agriculture Library, but few libraries seem to have given attention to this tool of scientific management.<sup>11</sup>

A position classification plan provides a sound basis for selecting the staff of the circulation department, for it describes the work to be performed and indicates the personal qualities and technical skills needed for each position. Three categories of workers are generally sought in circulation departments: the professional librarian, the non-professional worker serving as clerk, technician, or supervisor, and the part-time student assistant. Probably no department in the library makes more extensive use of student assistants than does circulation. Economic necessity may force a college or university library to employ student assistants in lieu of full-time clerks, but there are many objections to this practice. The full-time clerk brings continuity to the organization, provides maturity needed in supervisory jobs, and helps with difficult scheduling. He also can acquire technical skills, not economical to develop in the student assistant who, at best, is available for only a few years. It is doubtful whether many libraries have explored fully the use of mature, well-educated technicians in carrying out the work of a circulation department.

Career programs, both for professional librarians and clerks, are brought into focus by a position classification plan, so that the staff member is permitted to see the lines of promotion open to him. Knowing the promotional pattern also enables the employing librarian to select a staff member on the basis of his capacity for growth as well as for his ability to perform the immediate job. There is a tendency to use the circulation department as a training ground for new library personnel. While this arrangement provides good experience for new

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staff members, it reduces the efficiency of the department and carries the unwarranted implication that circulation work in itself is not a worthy career.

The most effective method for selecting clerical and student staff is generally considered to be a combination of written testing and personal interviewing. The written test is given to determine skills and aptitudes and the interview to assess personality. In the case of student assistants the grade average is also considered. Evidence of the validity of formal tests for predicting success of student assistants was demonstrated by Grace M. Oberheim in an experiment at Iowa State College.<sup>12</sup> As criteria for measuring success she used the ratings of supervisors and the records of promotion. R. E. McCoy reviews modern selection procedures applicable to libraries in his bibliography on personnel administration.<sup>13</sup>

In the many discussions on selecting student assistants for academic libraries these recommendations are frequently made: (1) Appointment should be based solely on the student's qualifications and not on his need for work or his expressed interest in librarianship. (2) The library staff should be permitted to make the selection, promotion, and dismissal; the immediate supervisor should take part in these processes. (3) The student assistant should serve a probationary period as part of the selection process, some form of testing being given at the end of this period to determine his comprehension of the job and his general knowledge of the library organization. (4) Underclass students should be selected for initial appointments because of their longer usefulness. (5) Fewer students should be selected, but for more hours per week (15 hours seemed to be a standard); they should not work so many hours that they endanger grades or health. (6) The privileges and educational aspects of a library job should be emphasized. (Student assistants in school libraries generally serve without pay as an extra-curricular activity. The formulation of library clubs with state and regional affiliation has greatly stimulated this program.) (7) One of the most reliable sources of good students is the recommendation of other students who have been successful employees. (8) Student employment offices should be requested to arrange class sectioning so that wherever feasible students can have large blocks of time to devote to their work assignments. (9) Students whose performance or attitudes are not satisfactory should be promptly dismissed.<sup>2, 14, 15</sup>

The serious shortage of trained librarians and the unsatisfactory channels for securing professional library personnel have been discussed frequently in professional literature, most recently by R. J.

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Blasingame, Jr., who recommends ways in which more effective procedures may be applied.<sup>16</sup> F. R. St. John reports on the experience with preprofessional positions at the Brooklyn Public Library, a pattern of recruiting that is being adopted by a number of large libraries that are located close to library schools.<sup>17</sup> Under the Brooklyn plan selected college graduates are offered a preprofessional position while they try out librarianship by attending a library school. Such an arrangement might be effective in filling junior positions in circulation departments of public or university libraries.

When clerical, professional, and student assistants work in a team relationship, so often the case in a circulation department, there should be a clear understanding of the status of each. "The clerical assistant," writes Dorothy Weber, "must be accepted as an individual with a distinct, if different, contribution to make toward the realization of the library's goals."<sup>18</sup> Opportunities should be provided for growth; pay scales for senior clerks should overlap junior professional positions; and distinct rights and privileges should be provided. Since libraries must often compete with local business and government agencies in acquiring and retaining a clerical staff, the library's total personnel program, no less than its salary scale, must meet this competition.

The success of a new employee on his job is closely related to the manner in which he is introduced to the job, to the organization, and to his colleagues. Experience in industry reveals that the first few days on the job may form the basis for permanent attitudes. The new staff member needs to know not only the specific requirements of his job but its relationship to the work and goals of the department. Some libraries have prepared staff handbooks to answer questions on such matters as pay, vacations, retirement, hours of work, parking facilities, etc.; other libraries have issued checklists of topics that should be covered in interviews with the personnel officer, the department head, and the immediate supervisor. Perhaps no action is more effective in orienting a new staff member than the friendly, informal assistance given by a colleague. Because of the multitude of procedures, lending regulations, and library policies that must be understood by members of the circulation staff, a procedures manual is frequently issued. Such a manual, if kept up-to-date, is especially useful in orienting student employees, where turnover is rapid and training programs are necessarily brief. Manuals may include information on the functions of the department, channels of authority, responsibility for specific tasks, scheduling policies, absences, and the importance of such matters as personal conduct, courtesy with the public, avoidance of

favoritism, accuracy in filing and shelving, and punctuality in meeting desk schedules.

The importance of good public relations for everyone working at the loan desk is repeatedly emphasized in discussions of circulation work. One thoughtless or discourteous act, it is pointed out, can injure the entire library system. And this applies to students, clerks, and librarians. A friendly critic of libraries has written that "many people in subordinate library posts behave toward those they are presumably there to help in a manner that would win them instant dismissal from behind the counter of any self-respecting department store."<sup>19</sup> Every library staff member who meets the public would benefit from reading Sarah L. Wallace's booklet, *Patrons Are People*, words of wisdom on public relations offered in palatable form.<sup>20</sup> Sound advice on how to be a good employee is offered by P. F. Drucker in a *Fortune* article that bears the subtitle "What every young college graduate should know—and won't be taught at school."<sup>21</sup> Failures in almost every field, Drucker maintains, are due to lack of ability to work with people, rather than lack of job skills.

While some staff members, professional and clerical, can carry on satisfactorily with only a brief introduction to their jobs, others will require an extensive training period either because of their limited experience in circulation work or because of the technical nature of their assignment. The tendency of library schools to place greater emphasis on philosophy and principles rather than on library techniques has increased the need for in-service training programs. E. A. Wight<sup>22</sup> and St. John<sup>23</sup> discuss the experience of libraries in training their staffs through such devices as staff meetings, classes, internships, and institutes. They note the limitations in applying the experience of industry to library situations, particularly to the professional staff. While formal training programs are sometimes used in large libraries, on-the-job training by the immediate supervisor is generally more effective. Further references to in-service training in libraries are found in McCoy's bibliography.<sup>18</sup>

The real test of a personnel program in the circulation department is in the day-to-day relationship between each staff member and his immediate supervisor. The department head and those assistants who direct the work of others should be selected for their ability to supervise no less than for their expert knowledge of books and library techniques. Fortunately, we have the assurance of personnel psychologists that the attitudes and skills that distinguish a good supervisor from a poor one can be learned and there is an extensive body of literature

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on the subject to which librarians may turn. Adra M. Fay's practical pamphlet on library supervision<sup>24</sup> and the articles by Amy Winslow<sup>25, 26</sup> and E. B. Stanford<sup>27</sup> apply sound principles of human relations to the library scene.

Numerous studies in business and industry have demonstrated that to be a good supervisor requires an understanding of the employee—his goals, his feeling, and his talents. A library supervisor should know that one of the most effective ways to win the loyalty of his staff is to make each employee feel that his work is both important and appreciated. In addition to possessing an employee-centered attitude, a library supervisor should be equipped with certain skills in dealing with people. He should be able to make clear assignments and to delegate authority; he should be competent to instruct and to check completed work; he should know the most effective ways to correct as well as to commend; and he should be able to discuss problems with staff members in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Frequent talks between a library staff member and his supervisor are invaluable in uncovering dissatisfactions, in clarifying misunderstandings, in pointing out strengths and weaknesses, and in adjusting inequities. The circulation assistant who is habitually late for desk duty, the assistant who is short-tempered with the public or dictatorial with his colleagues, the careless worker, or the "goldbrick"—all are in need of counseling if they are to be reclaimed to good membership on the circulation staff. Interviews may likewise reveal one of the most serious occupational hazards in circulation work—boredom. This is a condition found among highly skilled or professional employees whose work is not sufficiently challenging or varied to hold their interest. One of the chief values in using formal merit rating is that it requires periodic conferences of this kind.

In examining the staffing problems of a library circulation department a striking similarity is noted to those of a retail store. Both fields deal with people, merchandise, and records; in both there is the constant responsibility for satisfying the patron; and in both there is the danger of physical exhaustion brought about by long hours of exacting public contact. Such a similarity suggests that the circulation librarian might explore with profit a volume on retail personnel management such as that written by W. R. Spriegel and J. W. Towle.<sup>28</sup>

If a circulation department is to perform its work to the greatest satisfaction of both patrons and staff it must have a well-organized personnel program. Getting and keeping good people and using them effectively requires first of all an analysis of the tasks that are to be

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performed and the kinds of people that can perform them. Secondly, it requires care in selection, and thirdly, it requires the kind of day-to-day supervision that will insure that each employee performs his job well and is encouraged to develop to his greatest capacity.

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## Circulation Service and Public Relations

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AN OLD-TIME VAUDEVILLE COMEDIAN used to tell an amusing story of how he once went to a library to take out a book, but took out one of the circulation assistants instead. One can assume that the library assistant was charming and adroit in developing good public relations. Of course, she had a perfect right to be alluring, but no librarian has the right to be more alluring than a book.

Public relations are a way of life and involve people, not things. Since they are concerned with the relationships of people, they spring from the individual. Like metabolism, public relations work goes on all the time, so relentlessly that no one in public life can avoid it or ignore it. On the contrary, he should always be at the controls and see to it that his public relations are good rather than bad, or indifferent. The degree to which a person gets along well with other persons, and they, in turn, get along with him, measures the effectiveness of his public relations.

Institutions, as well as individuals, develop public relations because institutions are after all merely groups of individuals. The public relations of institutions are rather tangled and overlapping, however, for they involve not only the interplay of human relations, but also the evolving policies and traditional practices of the institution. The dedicated staff members of an institution therefore have the twofold obligation of serving their patrons diligently and of shaping the policies of their institution so that it becomes a public benefit rather than a public hindrance.

In any library the public relations of circulation service fall into two categories: individual and institutional. Since the personal relations of the staff members are no different from those of personnel in other library departments, they need no special consideration. Suffice it so say, ability and affability, cordiality and courtesy, eagerness and energy, and all the other desirable traits of an ideal public servant are the *sine qua non* for employment in circulation service. From the point

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of view of public relations, the circulation department is probably the most sensitive within a library for almost all of the patrons come to the circulation desk at one time or another. Just as the floorwalker and sales clerks of a department store can make or break their firm, the staff of a circulation department can build or destroy the reputation of a library.

In short, circulation assistants are the good-will ambassadors of the library. Their best efforts will be in vain, however, unless the institutional public relations are also kept in good repair. No matter how competent and pleasant a library assistant might be, he can never improve public relations if he is obliged to follow unsound policies or adhere to outmoded practices. He may become well liked and highly respected as an individual but until the library administration sets its house in order, the institution will be shunned by dissatisfied and irate patrons. Policies and practices, then, together with rules and regulations determine the matrix in which institutional public relations are molded. So far as can be determined, the institutional public relations of circulation service have heretofore never been critically analyzed.

Before delving into the main problem, it is important to emphasize that the primary function of librarianship is education. Librarians strive by means of the printed page "to promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding," which time honored phrase appears in the Charter of the Carnegie Corporation. The immediate goal of library circulation service is to induce patrons to borrow good books. Members of a well-managed circulation department also endeavor to persuade potential borrowers to become enthusiastic users. Thus, circulation service becomes analogous to merchandising. If a circulation librarian accepts this analogy, he should also adhere to the motto: "The customer is always right." But, he must never take the motto literally. In his role as educator, the librarian cannot assume that the library patron is always right or always knows what he wants. One of the primary duties of a librarian is to teach his clientele, tactfully of course, how to use a library. To this extent only does the circulation librarian part company from the simon-pure merchandiser. The latter's ambition is to wait upon his customers in such a manner that they will continue to trade with him. What more could a circulation librarian desire to accomplish?

Having satisfied himself of the true nature of circulation service, a circulation librarian should examine his department objectively to determine:

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1. Whether it bears a good reputation.
2. Whether its clientele is satisfied and pleased with the services rendered.
3. Whether its staff members are loyal, satisfied, and proud to be affiliated with it.
4. Whether top management has a favorable attitude toward the department.

Then and only then is he ready to develop a sound public relations program. His study of the department will undoubtedly reveal, however, that the public relations will need to be remedial as well as constructive. The constructive public relations have to do with those policies and practices essential to the maintenance of a flourishing department, and the remedial with those modifications and improvements in policies and practices that are requisite for bringing the department up to par.

A few individuals are born with a knack for sustaining almost perfect public relations. Institutions are never so fortunate. Their public relations can be improved but they can never be perfected. The small patronage enjoyed by libraries is a clear indication of their shortcomings.

A library is inherently a makeshift. Since the cost is prohibitive and the maintenance too troublesome, most persons cannot assemble a well-rounded library collection. Communities of citizens or scholars therefore must pool their resources if they expect to obtain any kind of satisfactory library service. Still, their needs will only partially be met by the libraries thus established. What an individual cannot provide for himself cannot assuredly be provided for him by society. True, a social institution is merely a group of individuals, but it never fulfills the aspirations of any one of the individuals.

Besides being a makeshift, a library is a compromise. For instance, it is apt to be inaccessible to many of its constituents, its books dirty and shabby, and its services not adequate to satisfy many patrons. Since libraries have not won universal acceptance despite the fact that they are free or are subsidized by compulsory subscriptions, there must be something basically wrong with them. The public relations of circulation service, as well as of the other phases of library service, must therefore be aimed toward the final removal of every deterrent to library use.

The institutional public relations of circulation service in a given library are profoundly affected by the policies, practices, procedures,

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rules, regulations, and traditions of the library. As C. A. Schoenfeld<sup>1</sup> has pointed out, "Public relations, in the proper sense of the term, is primarily a matter of institutional conduct and only secondarily a matter of publicity." Perhaps the easiest way of analyzing the public relations of circulation service is to "wipe the slate clean" of so-called institutional deterrents to reading, and focus attention upon an idealistic circulation department manned by an able and conscientious staff intent upon encouraging library patrons to borrow volumes from an excellent book stock. Would public relations be improved if all rules and regulations were abolished? Certainly, if the rules and regulations were unsound. Might there not be, however, certain standard procedures and practices as well as helpful rules and regulations, that would be conducive to good public relations? Let us see what actual experience reveals.

In conducting any type of public service, the goal is always the same: to provide a client with whatever it is he wishes, just so long as other individuals are not injured in the process. In any library, the function of circulation service is to provide patrons with desired books, efficiently, expeditiously, and if possible, economically. If a circulation department can achieve this goal, its public relations should be smooth and untroubled.

A librarian who is a stickler for rules and regulations and methodical procedures may sense that there must be something wrong with any proposal for carefree and rule free administration, but may not see at a glance how to controvert so appealing and disarming a suggestion. Let us, therefore, follow this tack to see where it leads us. Commencing with the public service motto: "Always assist a person in having his own way unless his way interferes with others," imagine a circulation department that operates on a *laissez faire* policy, free of all rules and regulations on the assumption that every patron will govern himself according to the Golden Rule.

An hypothetical patron visits this department and selects several books that he wishes to borrow. He takes them to the circulation desk and his library negotiations begin. Since he has made his own choices, he presumably knows what he wants, though from the excessive number of volumes that he has garnered, a librarian might suspect that his "bite" is bigger than his "chew." In the light of the accepted motto, how far can the librarian go towards accommodating him or at least placating him? If he has chosen too many popular titles, other patrons may be inconvenienced. He and the librarian must therefore bargain to reach an agreement as to the optimum number of volumes that

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can be granted to him without injury to other library users. Since there are no existing rules or regulations, he next must declare how long he intends to retain the volumes. Now he is apt to fret for he has not given this question any thought. All he wants to do is to take some books home to read. According to a fundamental law of human behavior, "men seek to gratify their desires with the least exertion." The borrower wonders why the library has not established a regular loan period for the lending of books? Here he is thwarted in his desire to borrow books simply because the library has neglected to adopt definite procedures for the conduct of its circulation department. It is conceivable that every book chosen by him could be charged for a length of time commensurate with its depth and breadth. In order to wind up the transaction, however, let us assume that an agreement is reached allowing withdrawal of the books for a period of four weeks. After the patron leaves, the wearied librarian realizes that every loan transaction cannot be turned into a "production number."

If there is a moral here it is that books should be issued for a specified length of time in the interest of good public relations if for no other reasons. Most public and academic libraries do establish definite rules governing loan periods and the number of volumes that may be withdrawn at any one time. Special libraries, on the other hand, often permit an unlimited number of books to be withdrawn for indefinite periods. In practice, collegiate libraries ordinarily extend similar courtesies to faculty members and graduate students. The tendency, however, is to formalize the charging of books, thereby enabling staff members to serve a large clientele expeditiously and efficiently. Definite procedures and sound regulations can therefore actually foster good public relations, but they must always be reasonable, and never inflexible. Exceptions should not only be countenanced but encouraged. Since library service is designed to meet the needs of the individual, librarians should consider carefully the needs of every patron.

It is the inflexible enforcement of rules and regulations that discourages readers, arouses animosity and discontent, and eventually destroys an otherwise good public relations program. Very few library patrons become disgruntled in a library where every staff member applies the rules judiciously without undue inconvenience to the patrons. A library staff can actually "have its cake and eat it, too," if the basic maxim of allowing every patron to have his own way is fostered by carefully planned procedures and sensible practices.

The major problems that arise in circulation service result from the

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multiplicity of rules and regulations many of which are neither understood nor appreciated by the patrons. It is sheer folly for a circulation librarian to deny a borrower fiction books unless he also selects some works of non-fiction. This procedure merely creates the impression that the librarians are bureaucrats intent upon discouraging use of the library. Extending this idea, the librarian who refuses to accept telephoned renewals is simply unaccommodating, inefficient, and un-businesslike. There is more than one way "to skin a cat." The library that extends its loan period from two weeks to four weeks effectually reduces the number of requests for renewal without jeopardizing its public relations.

It must be remembered, however, that public relations are unpredictable. If they were not, there would be no problems in public relations, and all circulation services could be as standardized as an electric light socket. Enhanced privileges do not invariably meet with public favor. A few years ago, an academic library lengthened its loan period from two weeks to four weeks, confident that every one would be pleased with the new policy. There arose such a clamor among faculty and students that the new procedure had to be discarded. The reactions of people to well-intentioned innovations cannot be foretold. Since human inertia is a strange phenomenon, the clientele of any establishment must be persuaded not shocked into acceptance of change.

As yet no one has found any *a priori* basis for determining an optimum loan period for books varying in size from fewer than a hundred to more than a thousand pages. Until an optimum is discovered, most librarians will have to be content to specify two-week or four-week loan periods excepting for books in great demand. When a librarian decides to refuse renewals, public relations should not suffer provided generous provision is made for a patron with a legitimate request for extension of the loan period. It is axiomatic that public relations suffer whenever a request is denied. Consequently, a librarian is justified in an adamant attitude only when other patrons have requested a book that a borrower wishes to renew.

This extended recital of a circulation transaction devoid of rules and regulations has been presented in order to demonstrate that rules and regulations can justifiably be enforced in the public interest, but it should be emphasized that rules and regulations would be totally unnecessary in a library with only one patron. Traffic regulations and "rules of the road" are essential because a library has many patrons and strives continually to attract more.

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In most libraries books are not in great demand during the summer months. Some public libraries, therefore, advertise extended loans in an effort to encourage vacationists to borrow books for extended loan periods. As the amount of reading accomplished during vacation months is small and library shelves are overcrowded, the vacation loan privilege is at least good publicity if not too significant in terms of improved public relations.

Standardized loan periods naturally imply a policing system for the retrieval of overdue books. Whether the penalty is the mild two-cents a day charged by most public libraries, or the more drastic ten to twenty-five cents per day assessed by collegiate libraries, the results are the same. A fine is a fine and never enhances a library's public relations. The circulation department of a library probably loses as much good will through the assessment of fines as it would from employment of short-tempered staff members. In spite of this, most librarians believe that library fines must be assessed to insure the prompt return of books. Their point of view has never been fully proven; library fines may actually be ineffectual. Small departmental libraries on university campuses are known to operate successfully without the assessment of fines. A few small and moderate-sized public libraries have abolished fines without dire results. So far as is known, however, no large university or public libraries have dispensed with fines.

If a delinquent borrower can be made to realize that a library does not benefit from accrued fines, he may not feel too bitterly about the assessment, but he is still not going to accept it graciously. (Is there a librarian in America who can truthfully say that he does not mind paying a fine for traffic violation?) Though university library fines are relatively high, cost of collection is too great to allow for any contribution to university revenues. In contrast, the fines charged by public libraries, though low, accumulate rapidly and have a beneficial effect upon municipal revenues. The librarian of a public library might therefore hesitate before dispensing with them. Perhaps some bold thinking should be done on the problem by both public and academic librarians.

There are several neat little questions concerning the knotty problem of fines. Should they, for instance, be permitted to accrue after they exceed the price of a book? Considered logically, fines are penalties and should therefore have no relationship to the price or value of a book. Logic, however, is seldom the key to good public relations. No borrower retains good will towards a library that charges

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him a ten dollar fine on a three dollar volume even though he may accept full responsibility for late return.

To be considered along with fines are charges for lost books and penalties for mutilation. In connection with these matters, a librarian serves more as a public custodian than as a reader's advocate and should if necessary, be indifferent to public relations. Borrowers who lose books or keep them out too long are often among a library's best patrons, but vandals should never be considered in a well-directed public relations program. This is the one phase and only phase of a library's public relations program that can be negative.

With further reference to library policing, some of the larger institutions employ guards or bouncers. The latter have very little relationship to circulation service, but it is probably unnecessary to state that guards at portals have a stifling as well as salutary effect upon library habitués. Obviously, incunabula and other rare treasures must be protected against thieves and vandals. Otherwise, guards are of no great advantage, since their salaries amount to much more than the pilferage they only partially check. Furthermore, they do not contribute to the growth of a library's good will. The average person does not like to be under constant surveillance and restraint. There are a few Pharisees in every group who will heartily approve of guards and will applaud a library's efforts "to protect its properties" and, dare one add, inconvenience its patrons? Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of guards, it is safe to conclude that guards are not a boon to good public relations.

Before proceeding further in our analysis of the public relations of circulation service, careful consideration should be given to the repeated use of the word, "public." J. H. Wright and B. H. Christian<sup>2</sup> have defined public relations as "a planned *program of policies and conduct* that will build *public confidence* and increase *public understanding*." What do they mean by "public"? Other authorities attest that there are as many publics as there are individuals. A person can easily cope with an infinite number and variety of publics since all he has to do is play the proper role, adjusting himself to the traits and characteristics of those with whom he does business. As Shakespeare observed, living is acting and everyone is acting all the time. For instance, a man behaves differently in a tavern from the way he conducts himself in a tabernacle.

So it is with his public relations; if wise, he responds appropriately in all his relationships with other persons. This is not to imply that

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good public relations come naturally. They must be cultivated and nurtured. Even then, a man cannot hope to succeed all of the time. He is bound to displease certain persons. Incompatibilities arise in spite of mutual desires for understanding. Most of the time, however, man can succeed in his public relations because he is resilient and adaptable.

Institutional public relations are, on the other hand, necessarily troublesome because rules and regulations, practices and procedures, are fixed and unresponsive to individual differences. A rule that pleases some persons will displease others. Non-smokers rejoice in seeing "No Smoking" signs, while tobacco addicts are disdainful of such signs and ignore them whenever possible. Thus, it is impossible for an institution to devise a "single packet" public relations program. It must address its best efforts to its various publics separately. In library circulation service the publics are legion. To reach them in any other manner than a *laissez faire* fashion, it is necessary to group them into appropriate clusters. Therefore, in developing a sound public relations program a circulation department must know its grouped publics. They can, of course, be divided into a myriad of minority groups and arranged in many different combinations.

For all practical purposes, however, the significant publics can be reduced to a workable minimum. A circulation department serves men and women; boys and girls; teachers and students; working men and housewives; and business men and professional men. These are its primary and most important publics. It is seen that there is considerable over-lapping in publics; boys and girls are also students. This does not matter; one type of service can be provided for boys and girls, and a more specialized service for these same patrons in their capacity as students. Incidentally, a circulation librarian also has relations with book dealers, equipment dealers, other library staff members, colleagues in other institutions, and top management, but it is to the major groups that the public relations of circulation service are chiefly directed. Each of the major groups develops its own public opinion based upon its own interests. In a public library, the business men may frown upon the harboring of tramps and loafers; in an academic library, the studious readers may frown upon the frivolous students who look upon the library as a rendezvous. In other words, every group is a special interest group consisting of special pleaders, and a circulation department must endeavor to serve all groups impartially and diligently.

As stated earlier, good public relations cannot be predicated upon

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the notion that each group can actually have its own way. In its negotiations with its patrons, a circulation department must endeavor to work out adjustments and compromises that will do justice to all; and adequately provide for the vast majority of patrons. In some instances, therefore, good public relations programs must be aimed towards retaining public confidence and understanding while at the same time denying certain urgent requests. Consequently, after delineating the various publics that it serves, a circulation department needs to obtain facts about each group. What these publics want, what they think about the library, why they think the way they do, and how they arrive at their opinions are questions of utmost importance in developing good public relations programs. Actually all that a librarian must do is to place himself in the position of the public and decide how he, too, would like to be served. He is not likely to go far wrong if he relies upon this simple procedure unless he happens to be so abnormal as to be unable to understand the point of view of another person.

Every service that a circulation department renders has overtones affecting public relations. Rental collections, sometimes euphemistically referred to as pay-duplicate collections, are nowadays taken for granted and generally accepted by library patrons. The propriety of a public library or tax-supported university library maintaining such collections has never been resolved. The library public anxious to obtain new books while they are still relatively clean and popular will approve highly of such collections. The library public that expects every book to be available free of charge will view such collections with misgivings. From time to time, small shops that maintain their own rental collections complain bitterly when a nearby library installs a rental collection. The possibility of arousing resentment and animosity should always be taken into account when a library projects new services. In other words, before establishing a rental collection a circulation department must take all of its publics into consideration. Rental collections have flourished in one community and languished in others. Some have aroused enough enmity to warrant abandonment.

Circulation librarians should be innovators and experimenters. A new service however well planned may fail or cause unrest, but it can usually be scrapped and forgotten without too much trouble. Some librarians dread the necessity of reversing themselves and believe that they will lose caste when a well-intentioned innovation backfires. If only they would realize that they are engaged in public service and

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are appointed to serve their clientele rather than to hew to their own personal likes and dislikes! A library exists for the patrons, not for the librarians.

A number of convincing reasons for dispensing with the registration of borrowers, and the issuance of library membership or courtesy cards can be marshalled. If the registration work in circulation departments could be dropped, libraries would undoubtedly save considerable sums of money. Practically everyone over the age of sixteen carries a plethora of identification cards. Why should a library go to needless expense to issue still one additional card? There are cogent reasons enough for supplying patrons with library membership cards, but even if there were not, good public relations would be the clincher. The truth of the matter is that people like to register and receive membership cards if the amount of red-tape involved is not excessive. To have a special card made out in one's own name inflates the ego. A patron of a library likewise would presumably have a greater affinity for and attachment to a library with which he is duly enrolled and officially authorized to carry a membership card.

Logic, efficiency, and economy are not nearly such effective tools of public relations as are appeals to man's pride and vanity. Simple souls are not the only ones that like to have their vanity massaged. Prominent citizens, V.I.P.'s, and other persons who are ambitious to be leaders early develop an inordinate amount of vanity. A sophisticated scholar, for instance, recently inquired of a university librarian what he would need to do to obtain stack privileges. When he was informed that he did not have to do anything at all, and that the librarian was pleased to open the doors of the establishment to him, the scholar left the librarian's office crestfallen and rather dubious about the privileges that had been extended to him.

One of the pleasures of work in a circulation department is the librarian's duty to cater to public opinion, not to attempt to reshape it. The librarian has nothing to foist on the public but can devote all his attention to lending books courteously, efficiently, and enthusiastically. A library patron is not greatly affected by a particular charging system so long as it does not retard him or put him to great inconvenience. Since everyone is a creature of habit, however, and endowed with inertia, a change in charging systems may upset patrons unless full discussion and description precedes installation. This is particularly true if a "Do It Yourself" or self-service charging device is being considered. Americans have a penchant for gadgets and ma-

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chines and machine charging is likely to appeal to the majority of readers.

Free access to all the books in a library collection is becoming the rule of the day. Many academic libraries now open their book stacks to all comers and new collegiate library buildings are being constructed with this end in view. Public libraries are also following the same pattern. In the liberalizing of stack privileges, there are two publics to be kept in mind; those who previously had access and those who newly acquire the right. Ordinarily, the latter public should be enthusiastic over the liberalized policy, whereas those who already had access gain nothing in the transition but actually lose the exclusiveness previously enjoyed. Naturally, they view the evolution as a revolution and will probably resent the change until they discover that they are not greatly affected by the extension of service to others.

If the book stacks are opened to the public, a circulation department immediately has a new public relations problem. The amount of internal housekeeping resulting from the change is appreciable. The books must be kept in good order on the shelves and shelf-reading carried on continuously. There is not much that circulation librarians can do about dingy shelves or shabby volumes but they can keep the books in proper order on the shelves. Otherwise, public relations will deteriorate and patrons will be heard to complain, "You can't find anything in that library," or simply "The place is a mess."

Competent and intelligent staff members contribute greatly to the public relations of a circulation department. A library assistant who can speak with authority and conviction is bound to win friends for a library. In every library there are numerous opportunities for educating library patrons. Youths and newcomers may be instructed in the use of card catalogs as well as the intricacies of the library's classification system; in short, how to be at home in the library and serve themselves. Perhaps in no better way can a circulation assistant endear himself to library patrons than by his ability to make appropriate substitutions when desired books are not owned by the library or are charged out to other patrons. A librarian can go one step further. After learning a patron's likes and dislikes, he can recommend old favorites or new acquisitions that are sure to please. This presupposes, of course, that the librarian have good common sense as well as a sound grasp of the nature and contents of the book stock.

Since the members of a circulation department serve the vast majority of a library's patrons, they have innumerable opportunities to

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enhance the public relations of the library. They can, for instance, invite borrowers to recommend books for purchase; notify patrons when sought after books are returned; and extend as many courtesies as possible, and thus win good will and gain the confidence and trust of readers.

No attempt need be made to delineate each and every way in which circulation service affects public relations. The services analyzed have been chosen because they lend validity to the notion that rules and regulations, procedures, and practices are detrimental to good public relations unless they are wisely administered. Similar analyses of the hours of opening; the segregation of questionable books on restricted shelves; the handling of books that must be used in the library only; the delays in service resulting from late acquisition of new titles, publications tied up at a bindery, and slow service at the delivery desk; inconvenience occasioned by the decentralization of special collections; inaccessibility of the library; parking difficulties; loans to non-residents or outsiders; assessment of special fees; and merely the absence of books from the shelves, would further reinforce the evidence. Everything that takes place in circulation service makes an impression upon library patrons.

The indirect negotiations conducted by circulation department librarians through correspondence or telephone calls are particularly important in public relations. However they do not involve unique problems. Post-card overdue notices and other library forms must be couched in well-chosen terms if good public relations are to result. Telephone technique and courtesy are also essential to good public relations.

Publicity is often confused with public relations whereas it is only one of the minor and least important phases of the broad problem. A circulation department can cultivate very fine public relations without taking the trouble to publicize its services. Nevertheless, public relations work is often jocularly defined as "doing a good job and telling the world about it." Library publicity should simply be used to acquaint the public with the library's aims, accomplishments, and resources. Other types of publicity might be amusing, harmless, or even innocuous, but in the long run they would be inconsequential.

The staff of a circulation department has an obligation towards colleagues within the profession. The professional library journals afford the best means for informing colleagues of progress in the field of librarianship. If a circulation department invents a new kind of charging system or devises a new workable procedure, other librarians

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should learn of it through articles in the journals. Such efforts on the part of librarians are of two-fold benefit: they help to publicize a library, and, what is more important, provide other librarians with just the information that they may have been seeking.

What circulation librarians do, how they perform their duties, what they say, what they write, and the impressions they make upon library patrons determine to a large extent the success of their public relations. In other words, performance and conduct are the true gauges of good public relations. When all is said and done, people are the primary consideration in public relations. We are therefore well advised to conclude that the Golden Rule, "Dealing with others as we would have them deal with us," is the best prescription for public relations in circulation service. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

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## Interlibrary Lending and Similar Extension Services

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THE PRACTICE OF INTERLIBRARY LOANS has long been recognized as a necessary adjunct to the more direct service functions of libraries. It has a place not only in the reference and circulation services but also as a consideration in the development of acquisition policies, administrative cooperation, and public relations. Intensive discussions of cooperation between libraries will inevitably touch upon interlibrary loans as a fundamental, basic concept as well as an example of successful interlibrary cooperation. Thus references are made to interlibrary loans in several previous issues of *Library Trends*. In one issue, Carl Melinat<sup>1</sup> has written an article entitled "Interlibrary Lending." He briefly summarizes the growth of interlibrary loans in the United States from the oft-quoted first suggestion in print by S. S. Green<sup>2</sup> in 1876 through the cost studies by J. G. Hodgson<sup>3</sup> in 1951, with references to the 1940 Interlibrary Loan Code and its later revision by the A.C.R.L. Committee on Interlibrary Loans which is entitled "General Interlibrary Loan Code 1952." Most of his article, however, is a report on the 1949 survey he made on procedures, practices, and problems in interlibrary loans with the answers to his questionnaire given by 100 libraries, which included 50 university and special libraries, 30 college libraries, and 20 public libraries. His survey was made before the development and adoption of the A.L.A. Interlibrary Loan Form in 1951 and the General Interlibrary Loan Code in 1952. He does comment, however, that some of the specific problems and their recommended solutions have been handled by the national acceptance and use of these two instruments developed to facilitate interlibrary loans.

This article will not try to cover the area that Carl Melinat has done so well. Nor will it be an historical review of the subject of inter-

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library loans in this country. An exhaustive historical study on that subject by W. M. Luther,<sup>4</sup> Direktor of the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek in Göttingen has been published in the 1955 volume of *Libri*. The reader who is interested in historical details is referred to that article with its extensive bibliography. We are concerned here specifically with interlibrary lending and allied extension services as they pertain to the circulation functions of libraries, one of the segments of L. W. Dunlap's<sup>5</sup> "thin and wide slice" of librarianship.

Interlibrary lending is one of two interlocking circles of procedures that form the cooperative function known as interlibrary loans. The other circle is that of interlibrary borrowing, which is usually considered a reference function since it involves the bibliographical verification and location of materials not owned by the library but needed by one of its patrons. The term "interlibrary loans" is not, however, as definitive as it appears. The 1952 General Interlibrary Loan Code defines interlibrary loans as "transactions in which material is lent by one library to another library for the use of an individual borrower. Interlibrary loan service supplements a library's resources by making available, through direct loans for a *short* period of time, materials located in other libraries and not owned by the borrowing library."<sup>6</sup> This definition does not delineate the relationship that the lending library may have with the borrowing one nor the method of the loan.

Some libraries use "interlibrary loan" to refer to loans made by a central library to its branches within the same legal system, while others include in it the extension responsibility of state libraries to the local libraries within the state. Students and faculty on a university campus are apt to think that the interlibrary loan service will procure materials for them from one of the campus branches or departmental libraries while special librarians record as interlibrary loans books that they themselves pick-up from a neighboring library although charged to them on a special borrower's card. Research librarians, including librarians in universities and colleges, think of interlibrary loans as a cooperative service between two or more libraries that are administratively independent with no statutory or legal responsibility to one another. They may have cooperative agreements to loan to each other as do members of a bibliographic center, but their loans fit the definition of purpose as stated in Section II of the 1952 General Interlibrary Loan Code: "The purpose of interlibrary loans is to make available for research and for serious study library materials not in a given library, with due provisions made by

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*the lending library for the rights of its primary clientele.*"<sup>6</sup> This group of librarians, to the distress of the state and public librarians, emphasize the importance of the first part of Section III in the Code which states: "Interlibrary loan service is a *courtesy and a privilege*, not a right, and is dependent upon the cooperation of many libraries. Because of the cost of the service and the conflict in demands for certain classes of material, the interlibrary loan service should be restricted (especially when borrowing from large research libraries) to requests that *cannot* be filled by any other means."<sup>6</sup>

What is the basic conflict or confusion between these varying interpretations of the term? The types of materials loaned can range from an obscure nineteenth century novel needed by a professor of English literature to an Atomic Energy Commission report on industrial uses of radioactive isotopes needed by an industrial engineer—and could be requested through a college, university, or public library in the first instance or through a public, special, or university library in the second example. Though the type of materials requested by universities and colleges may be predominately what is termed research materials while that loaned between units of a public library system may be largely fiction and general interest titles, still the variety of publications lent by each type of library precludes an exclusive differentiation solely on the basis of materials loaned.

Perhaps the statistics of loans can be used as a basis of differentiation, but here there is further confusion due to lack of definition of terms. The special librarian who borrows for her clientele directly on her own loan card from the public library records such titles as interlibrary loans, but the public library would include those loans to her in its general circulation statistics of direct loans. A regional library, such as the Regional Library Service Center at Watertown, New York,<sup>7</sup> may record its loans to member libraries as circulation statistics but list as "Interlibrary Loans Handled" requests forwarded to the State Library of which it is an administrative division. A public library system, such as the Los Angeles Public Library,<sup>8</sup> may consider as interlibrary loans those books lent to branches from the central "Interlibrary Loan Collection" and yet also include in this designation volumes procured from libraries outside of its own system.

In this difference of interpretation may lie the key to the confusion about the term interlibrary loans. If one looks at interlibrary lending from the viewpoint of the responsibility of the lending library to the borrowing library the picture becomes somewhat clearer. On the one hand are those libraries to which a specific library may have a legal,

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statutory, or contractual responsibility; while on the other hand are the many libraries to which there is a cooperative, courtesy service. To be more precise in use of terms one could say that to the first group one did *intra*-library lending within the legal responsibility, while to the latter group one did *inter*-library lending between two or more cooperating libraries.

Upon examination of the two types of loans one finds far-reaching disparities stemming from this difference in responsibility of the lending library. The basically different approaches to the problem affect policy as well as procedures, routines and forms used, and notably the quantity and type of materials handled. Those in the first group distinguished by intra-library lending have allied services grouped under the larger designation of "extension service." On the other hand, among those in the group limited to inter-library lending are libraries associated in the cooperative developments of the bibliographic and interlibrary centers such as the Pacific Northwest Bibliographic Center.

Another way to point out the differences between these two services is to look at the primary clientele of the lending library. In a system involving branch libraries, whether they be a county or municipal system, a far-flung system of branches of a company library, or the branches and departmental libraries of a college or university, the primary clientele to the central library as well as to each of its branches is the borrower that comes to any unit of the system. The central library, in order to reach and better serve its widely spread or specialized groups of borrowers, has delegated part of its primary responsibility to these branches which are extended fingers of its service. Thus the branch libraries become service intermediaries between the central library and its patrons, acting only as carriers, as it were. Any loan made by the central library to its branches or made between branches of the same system are for their primary clientele.

A bit further removed from this closely knit responsibility are the state libraries in relation to the libraries of their own states. Here, however, library laws of the different states, though varied in detail, have established, definite statutory responsibilities to all the citizens of the state which includes extension service either directly or through the local libraries within the state. The extension service includes interlibrary lending although the actual loan process may be centered in the general state library, as indicated in the *Role of the State Library*,<sup>2</sup> rather than under the extension service agency. In order to reach the citizens of the state, therefore, the state library becomes a "library's library," and lends through the local libraries to its own

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primary clientele. Again, therefore, a form of intra-library lending under statutory regulation.

The loans to libraries that are independent and to which the lending library has no legal or statutory responsibility must be a secondary responsibility to that owed the primary clientele. Thus the Cleveland Public Library would lend as a primary responsibility to its own branches or to any libraries in the area with which it had contractual responsibilities and as a cooperative responsibility to Western Reserve University Library within the Greater Cleveland area, but it would lend as a courtesy loan to the University of Nebraska Library. In the two latter cases the loans would be made only if the requested material was not in use or in demand at that time by the library's own primary clientele. Research libraries find that all of what they call interlibrary loans are secondary responsibilities, loaned willingly if requests do not conflict with the needs of their primary clientele. Even though they may be state universities or colleges, their primary clientele are their own faculty and students, members of their own institutions, and not every citizen of the state. In the case of the Library of Congress, the largest research library in this country, the primary clientele are the members of Congress and the personnel of the federal agencies in Washington, not every citizen in the United States. They try to satisfy the needs of those citizens that can not obtain the materials for research from their own local or state libraries, but can do so only after the primary clientele's needs are fulfilled.

The distinction can be made, therefore, between the two types of interlibrary loans as primary and secondary loans, possibly less confusing terminology than intra-library loans and inter-library loans. In examining them from their circulation aspects we will take them up as separate responsibilities, even though many public and state libraries combine them into one administrative procedure.

*Primary (intra-library) loans.* M. F. Tauber has said that: "Reduced to its elements, interlibrary loan is not basically different from the usual loan from library to reader. In essence, all libraries which are willing to cooperate become a single library with tremendous resources, and that library seeking a particular item for one of its patrons becomes, in turn, a patron of the inclusive system. Thus, in theory, any reader can draw on the resources of any library. In practice, there are certain limitations, based on the necessity for working out in detail the technicalities of the reasonable use of an idea of such vast scope."<sup>10</sup> The libraries who recognize interlibrary lending as a primary responsibility in effect have accepted this theory as their state-

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ment of policy. They agree with L. R. McColvin that one of the four essential conditions of a library extension service is to "enable those particular books—any books, however specialized—required by any reader anywhere for his own special needs to be supplied."<sup>11</sup> They have established their procedures to handle this service as simply as possible and integrated them with their direct loan circulation routines, in what Mason Tolman,<sup>12</sup> of the New York State Library, calls "Call Card Simplicity." As such, the main library, whether it be the headquarters library of a school system, the central library of a county or city system, or the state library servicing local independent libraries, supplies its own call-slips (usually some form of a 3 x 5 slip or card used vertically or horizontally) for loan requests. These call-slips are filled-in by the local librarian, or the reader needing the material, and forwarded through established channels such as by a regular delivery service, or by mail. The bibliographical information supplied is usually barely sufficient for identification by the main library since most of the smaller service units have very limited tools for verification or reference.

The actual department to which these requests are sent may not be the circulation department, but may be called the department of branches, the headquarters library, the extension service, the "Mail Reference Unit,"<sup>13</sup> or some similar name—but whatever its name it is procedurally responsible for servicing these requests. It acts as a proxy for the borrowing library and its individual borrower. As such, this service unit checks the request in the central library's catalog, fills-in the call-number and sends the request through the usual channels for obtaining the book, whether this means going to the stack in an open-shelf library or sending the request through the loan desk for a closed-stack one.

The book is delivered to the extension or branch servicing unit where a record of the loan is kept, often on the original request slip. The book is then forwarded either by mail or via a regular delivery service. Where the branch or extension division maintains a union catalog of branch holdings or a special interlibrary loan collection, as at the Los Angeles Public Library, the request may be filled directly from within that department by charging the book from its own collection, or forwarding the request to the branch shown to own a copy. In many public libraries even if the book is drawn from the main stack collection the only charge record is kept in the branch department. This is apt to be particularly true if the main circulation records are kept by date due rather than by call number or author. The branch

department thus becomes responsible for the due date, and it in turn passes this responsibility on to the branch librarian requesting the book.

Holds or reserves on books that are charged out to another borrower are handled the same as for the direct borrower, but the central extension service is notified and sent the book when it comes in. This unit then forwards the volume to the requesting branch, in some cases also mailing to the individual borrower his reserve postcard to show the book is now available for him at his branch.

These headquarters library service units are also the readers' advisory or reference service for their primary clients—the smaller library units. This function is included under their purpose to supply the specific supplementary material needed by an individual borrower. Many of the state libraries, such as New York and California, have provided on their call-slips a space for subject requests. These can be used if the specific titles are not known. The slips so filled in are either checked by the extension agency or forwarded to the reference or other appropriate department in the central library. The catalog is checked, pertinent titles chosen, call-slips made out, and the appropriate books, with the original request slip, sent to the extension unit where the charge record is filed and the books sent to the requesting library. Again, the extension unit acts as proxy for the branch or local librarian and her borrower. In some of the smaller library systems the branch librarians actually do this "proxy" service themselves by making weekly trips to the main library where they select the books they think will fit their borrower's needs and leave these books with the branch department to be charged and shipped to their own branch.

The type of material usually requested and lent as extension loans is similar to that normally available in the medium-sized or large public library but which is on a subject not adequately covered or a type beyond the budgetary limits of the local, smaller units of service. Many of the large city and county central libraries have collections of considerable depth and coverage and are therefore able to fill the majority of the needs of their borrowers. Carma R. Zimmerman and R. J. Blasingame have written:

The unique function of the state agency in the inter-library loan program is to supply the more highly specialized, ordinarily more expensive, books rather than the items which are likely to be in heavy demand throughout the state. . . . In some instances, the term "more expensive" doubtless includes research materials of one type or

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another. However, it seems safe to assume that for the most part the phrase encompasses technical books, university press books, and other interpretative works which it would be uneconomical for any but the large public library to purchase for its own collection. Where these materials are held in a central collection available to all, they are more apt to be used a sufficient number of times to warrant their cost than they might be in the local public library.<sup>14</sup>

The above noted materials are usually in English with easily found bibliographical citations. The authors quoted above, however, were also interested in the extent of loans of materials in foreign languages. Of the fifty state and provincial libraries of the United States and Canada who answered their questionnaire, forty-eight of them reported that they lent books on interlibrary loan to their local libraries but only twenty-seven said that they lent foreign language materials.<sup>15</sup> Since New York State Library had not answered the questionnaire, it was not included although it is known to have a large collection of foreign language materials which is used heavily by the foreign population of the state borrowing through local libraries.

The greatest percentage of materials requested through the primary or intra-library lending service is for the general reader, but there is the occasional request from a scholar, teacher, budding genius, or independent research man not attached to a college, university, scientific, or technical organization with its own research library through which he can satisfy his bibliographic needs. The retired or "lone wolf" research men and women are apt to be the ones that confound the local librarian with requests for material beyond her facilities to routinely supply or even understand. One such local librarian, Dorothy B. Thomas of North Carolina, writes: "If the average reader actually existed, it would make library service much simpler for the small public library. Our libraries are more average than our borrowers . . . Prodded on by grimly determined borrowers, some of us in small libraries have braced ourselves to make requests of the larger public libraries and the college and university libraries. Frequently and generously the larger libraries have lent."<sup>16</sup> She goes on to describe the interlibrary loan arrangement that has been developed in North Carolina where requests are channeled through the North Carolina Library Commission (the state agency charged with extension service within that state). This demand for service has resulted in the establishment of a union catalog of the public libraries in the state with subject specialization agreements among the participating libraries.<sup>17</sup>

The North Carolina interlibrary loan plan represents a step between

the extension service responsibility to a primary clientele and the cooperative agreements of the bibliographic centers and their members. However, it is still based on the concept that public libraries within a state have a major responsibility to supply the book needs of the citizens of that state. Former restrictions of limiting a library's circulation and other services to only its own tax area are gradually being lifted by such agreements and by contractual and reciprocal agreements between public library systems, extending the privileges of a borrower's library card to adjacent communities. These extensions of the direct loan privilege, as developed in several metropolitan areas in California<sup>18, 19</sup> and elsewhere, reduce the need for interlibrary lending between the contracting independent libraries since their borrowers can obtain needed materials directly from the other participating libraries. By such contractual and cooperative agreements and with the direct assistance of the state libraries the theory of an extension service providing library service to every citizen is coming closer to fulfillment.

*Secondary (inter-library) loans.* Interlibrary lending as a secondary responsibility embraces the large area of loans referred to in the 1952 General Interlibrary Loan Code. Although the greatest percentage of these loans are made by the larger research libraries in the country, still many of the same libraries that handle a large volume of primary interlibrary lending also lend on this secondary basis. Some include both kinds of service in the same procedures and under the same service division and do not differentiate between them in their statistics. Others separate them, recognizing that the usual intra-library requests are for patrons that do "not need or demand access to technical and complete collections [but that] the more specialized students and research workers frequently find the material in any one library inadequate for their needs,"<sup>20</sup> and for these the service of lending between independent, research, and specialized collections is necessary.

To understand the more complicated procedures that have developed for these secondary interlibrary loans one needs to examine them not only from the difference of responsibility to the borrowing library but also from the type of material most often requested, the historical development of this interlibrary loan concept, and the accepted purpose of such loans.

The purpose of the interlibrary loans to the secondary-clientele has become liberalized within our generation. The 1940 version of the Interlibrary Loan Code, which reflected an expansion in detail of the

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1917 and earlier codes, stated that "the primary purpose of the interlibrary loan service is to aid research calculated to advance the boundaries of knowledge by the loan of unusual books, after due provision has been made for the rights and convenience of the immediate constituents of the lending library. . . . Some libraries may find it desirable to lend material for other than research purposes to institutions within their own territory or toward which they may have some particular obligation. Such transactions should be considered as part of an extension service rather than as interlibrary loans."<sup>21</sup> The framers of that Code were fighting a losing battle. The interpretation of the term interlibrary loan, as we have pointed out, has been expanded to include those extension services, albeit adding confusion thereby, and the material acceptable for loan is no longer restricted to the "unusual book."

With the realization by even the large research libraries that no library could supply all the needed materials in any given intensive research project, cooperative library programs moved from theoretical hopes into needed realities. The bibliographic centers at Philadelphia, Denver, and Seattle materialized to make available through union catalogs, cooperatively developed and maintained, the interchange of library materials needed within their areas. The need for subject specialization and for responsibility in collection building rather than competitive duplication between libraries was increasingly recognized and culminated in the formation of the Farmington Plan. Through this plan sixty-two research libraries voluntarily agreed to an experiment in specialization "to make sure that at least one copy of each new foreign book and pamphlet that might reasonably be expected to interest a research worker in the United States will be acquired by an American library, promptly listed in the Union Catalogue at the Library of Congress, and made available by interlibrary loan or photographic reproduction."<sup>22</sup>

Thus the type of material recognized as justifiably interlibrary loan material moved from the "unusual" books to foreign publications outside the subject responsibility of the borrowing library, and these sixty-two cooperating libraries agreed to make them available on interlibrary loan. However, "current fiction; *current issues of periodicals*, . . . [excepting foreign or little used titles]; *inexpensive items currently purchasable* in this country; books for class use; a high percentage of books basic for a thesis being written for the borrowing institution; current books for which there is *anticipated a recurring demand* in the borrowing library"<sup>23</sup> are still listed in the 1952 General Inter-

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library Loan Code as types of materials that should not be requested on interlibrary loan. It should be pointed out here that many of the categories above, specifically restricted from interlibrary loans, are the very ones accepted as the responsibility of a lending library in its intra-library loans to its primary clientele. During the compilation of the 1952 Code the research libraries that were asked to comment and give suggestions for the Code strongly expressed their convictions that this type of material if needed should be supplied by a library through its own acquisitions not by dependence on loans from the collections of other administratively independent libraries.

Therefore, the materials most acceptable for interlibrary loans are still the unusual titles, the foreign publications, whether monographs or serials, and the expensive materials not easily procurable in this country, as well as the out-of-print research books and periodicals. These publications are not only "unusual" to the majority of non-research libraries but they also involve complicated bibliographical entries that are often difficult to identify, especially through the limited reference tools found in most small libraries. Many of them are publications of committees, learned societies, government agencies, academic institutions, and other corporate bodies for which the author entry may be two or three lines long instead of the two or three words of a single author entry. The need for accuracy and verification increases the more complex the entry becomes. One learned society, for instance, may have five to ten subject divisions each of which in turn can have two or three sub-sections, any one of which can publish several serial titles and a great variety of monographic works. Unless the correct name of the society, the subject division and the sub-section are given, as well as the exact title of the publication wanted, it will be difficult for the lending library to determine what to send—and the individual borrower is not at hand to be questioned in person by the lending library. Thus the borrowing library must determine in advance all the necessary bibliographic information pertaining to the publication wanted and include it in the original request if it expects to receive the correct title. A call-number provides a short-hand designation to identify a publication but without this, completeness in entry is required.

The larger 5 x 8 A.L.A. Interlibrary Forms were developed not only to give sufficient area for these complex bibliographical entries but also to provide space to indicate the reference tools used by the borrowing library in verification of the publication, or, lacking that, the source of reference of the original citation. Space was also needed,

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and provided, for (1) the printing of the most frequently used reports in answering interlibrary loan requests; (2) the name and status of the individual borrower (often an element in getting material released for interlibrary loan that would not be available for an unknown individual); (3) noting the method, date, and cost of shipment; (4) the loan period and any special instructions as to use; and (5) the addresses of both the borrowing and lending libraries. Since some libraries had been using from eleven to fourteen different printed forms to handle their interlibrary loan correspondence, the multiple-copy form was also designed to materially decrease the clerical cost of correspondence previously required in interlibrary loans between two independent libraries.

In the early days of this type of cooperation between libraries the loan of a book to another library was a policy decision made by the librarian himself and arranged between his office and the requesting librarian whom he knew well, at least by reputation. Each loan was an exception to the general policy and routine of loans to his own clientele. Since the material loaned was unusual and apt to be hard to replace, careful wrapping, high insurance, and acknowledgement of receipt at each end were required. There was no standardization of correspondence forms, each library developing its own and having them mimeographed or printed as the quantity of loans increased. On each one of the forms, the bibliographical entry for the title requested had to be typed or written; and on half of them the name and address of either the borrowing or lending library, while on the other half the name and address of the individual borrower. In addition to the forms interchanged between the two libraries, there were the request forms received from the borrowing library's own patron, notification to him of the book's arrival, notification to him if a renewal had been granted, recalls for overdue books, and a receipt that he had to sign when he took the book out and paid the transportation costs. Exchanged by the libraries, in addition to the initial request letter, were forms for notice of shipment, acknowledgement of receipt, renewal requests and renewal granted forms, emergency recalls and overdues, notification and acknowledgement of return, and forms for reporting that a requested book was not available. As the quantity of loans increased the clerical costs increased also, both in printed forms and in the clerical personnel required to handle the extensive paper work.

It was in an effort to cut the high cost of all the duplicate typing and the printing of a great variety of forms that the A.C.R.L. Interlibrary Loan Committee in 1950 investigated the possibility of national use

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of the 4-part, multiple-carbon, unit-request form developed the previous year by the University of California libraries for use between their own eight campuses. Convinced that the savings effected were so great that all libraries should be able to use the form, and require its use by their interlibrary borrowers, the Committee revised the form for more general use and persuaded three library supply firms to stock it, selling it at a low enough price so that even the smallest college library could afford to purchase it. The Committee presented it in 1951 to the A.C.R.L. Executive Board and had it accepted for sponsorship as the recommended interlibrary loan form. As such, it was recommended in the 1952 General Interlibrary Loan Code,<sup>24</sup> and described in Appendix II of the Code.

In 1955 a new interlibrary loan committee was set-up by the Reference Section of A.C.R.L. to find out, among other duties, whether any changes were advisable in this now standard, nationally used interlibrary loan form. After circularizing 150 libraries that handle varying loads of interlibrary loans, the Committee found that there were a number of changes recommended, principally regarding difficulties with the interleaved carbons and a need for more white space for complicated bibliographical entries and explanatory notes. These suggestions were used as the basis for revision of the form and have been described in detail by Foster Palmer,<sup>25</sup> the present chairman of the committee, in the *Library Journal*. There were no changes made in the size, number of copies, nor basic format but changes were made in details of phrasing and condensation of instructions. These changes have been incorporated into the 1956 revised edition of the General Interlibrary Loan Code.

Most of the libraries wrote expressing themselves as well-pleased or even enthusiastic about the convenience and time-saving factors of the form. However, those libraries that consistently preferred the call slip 3 x 5 size interlibrary loan form reiterated their objections to the larger size. These included the state libraries which, although they all prefer the 3 x 5 size, have been unable to agree among themselves on a standard form acceptable to all of them. Consequently each one continues to supply free to its borrowing libraries a supply of its own forms. The same is true of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Library and the National Library of Medicine,\* each having a 3 x 5 call slip type request form but materially differing from each other. Thus, if a college library borrows occasionally from its state library,

\* Effective March 1, 1957, the National Library of Medicine discontinued its AFML Form 141 and adopted the standard A.L.A. Interlibrary Loan Form.

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the U.S.D.A. Library and the National Library of Medicine it must keep stocks of each of these different forms and, in using them, not only fill in the forms themselves but also have to type envelopes and separate notifications of return as well as any requests for renewals. While for its interlibrary loan requests to all other libraries in the United States and Canada the standard A.L.A. Interlibrary Loan Form may be used with only the initial typing of the form necessary, because it supplies a renewal request form and notification of return shipment and may be used in window envelopes.

Within the lending library the routines for handling the secondary clientele interlibrary loans are geared to the circulation and reference procedures, which vary from library to library even as do their call-slips in size and format from 2 x 3 cards, 3 x 5 slips to IBM cards. The requests may go to a person, or a division—depending upon the size of the operation—either in the circulation or reference department, or a special interlibrary service department. As in the extension agencies of the public and state libraries, this service librarian acts as a proxy for the requesting library, checking the request through the main catalog, procuring the book through established routines from the particular unit that shelves it, and shipping it to the borrowing library. Most university libraries have from three to thirty branches, fragmentations from the whole collection, determined by subject matter rather than by geographical placement. These subject branches and departmental libraries are service units having their own circulation files, usually arranged by call-number, and need to know where and to whom their materials are charged. The service unit, therefore, whether it is the main loan desk or a branch or departmental library, retains the call-slip record of the interlibrary loan, sending the book itself to the interlibrary lending service division. The latter division keeps its records on the A.L.A. Interlibrary Loan Form, sometimes supplemented by a duplicate call slip file for checking on overdue books. This division is responsible for shipping the book and notifying the borrowing library of this shipment as well as of any special instructions for use and due date; and it also collects the reimbursed transportation charges from the borrowing library.

Since many of the titles requested involve complex entries and foreign languages that may range from the common western European ones to Slavic, Indic, and Oriental, the librarian in charge of this service needs to be familiar with bibliographical reference tools as well as foreign languages, or be able to call upon the reference personnel for help in identification. If the requested title is not found immedi-

ately in the main catalog it is checked through published catalogs of the Library of Congress, British Museum, Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, or similar appropriate ones. If not found there, it is checked in the national trade bibliographies and even, if the request seems to warrant it, in abstracting journals and subject bibliographies. Frequently the publication is found under a different form of entry through this verification process, and the book is located, under this new entry, in the lending library. Large research libraries often have extensive collections of unanalyzed monographic serial sets and, unless the series is indicated in the original request, the title though actually owned would not be apparent in the main catalog. Even when the title is still not found in the library's collection the corrected or new entry information is forwarded to the borrowing library, especially when it has been found to be part of a series, by annotating the yellow copy of the form, sheet B, so that the borrowing library may cite it correctly when asking the next library on its list.

Those libraries that fortunately belong to a bibliographic center have this type of verification service, as well as checking for locations, performed for them by the Center. The process is well described in a recent issue of the *Philadelphia Bibliographical Center News Letter*,<sup>26</sup> which also tells how its own union catalog is searched for locations and, if not found there, the staff of the National Union Catalog is requested to check its files of some 15 million entries showing holdings from about 700 libraries in this country.

Reference was made earlier, in the quotation from the Farmington Plan Handbook, of the availability of materials either by interlibrary loan or by photographic reproduction. The alternative of photographic reproduction is also included in the 1952 General Interlibrary Loan Code, Section IX<sup>27</sup> where reference is made to the Gentlemen's Agreement between libraries and publishers regarding the photocopying for research purposes of copyrighted materials. As a result of two articles on the Code and the availability of interlibrary loans that appeared in the *Law Library Journal* in 1953,<sup>28, 29</sup> L. C. Smith,<sup>30</sup> senior attorney at the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress, wrote two articles for the same journal explaining and amplifying the Gentlemen's Agreement. There is not space to explain it here, but it is wise to know that the larger research libraries, including the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library, follow it rigidly regarding copyrighted materials and will supply only one microfilm or photostat copy of a journal article or part of a book that is still in copyright. The materials for which no copyright is extant in this country can be

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copied more freely. Because of the heavy local use of scientific and technical periodicals many libraries will not lend their originals but instead will make photographic copies of specific articles at a nominal charge. Special librarians find this substitute of particular value for their clientele who thereby procure copies for their own files. Prices for photographic copies vary somewhat from library to library but at the present writing are usually around 5c per opening (two facing pages) for microfilms and 50c for the same for photostats no larger than 11½ x 14, with a minimum photographic and shipping charge of about \$1.25.

The microfilming of theses represents a special development in the substitution of a photographic copy for the loan of the original. Upon the recommendation, in 1952, of a special committee of the Association of Research Libraries,<sup>31</sup> many university libraries now make their doctoral dissertations available only through the purchase of microfilm copies—procured either through their own laboratories or from University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, a microfilming publishing house. The latter organization publishes the monthly *Dissertation Abstracts* which lists, with abstracts, all doctoral dissertations that they have available on film, with the number of pages, price for positive microfilm or paper copy, and their publication number. Theses listed here are available only through purchase, which is also true of theses from institutions that provide their own microfilms such as the University of Chicago and the University of California at Berkeley. The microfilm cost for the student or scholar needing a particular thesis is often less than the transportation cost for shipment of the original typescript. In spite of efforts by librarians to have bound theses included in the special book-rate, the U.S. Postal Regulations still require that they be sent first-class mail for domestic shipment so the usual practice for libraries is to send them by express, first-class, with \$50.00 insurance, (which is actually less than the usual cost of replacement for a thesis) at the minimum cost of \$4.04 round trip.

The cost of interlibrary lending, over and above the transportation costs, has been of considerably more concern to the research libraries than to those handling intra-library lending to their primary clientele. To the latter group the cost is usually included in the general extension services, grouped with similar services such as regular shipment of supplementary collections to branches, bookmobile service to outlying units, or regional centers for the use of local librarians. Even though the Los Angeles Public Library survey<sup>32</sup> listed as a separate item the personnel cost of the interlibrary loan division within the

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branches department, they did not attempt to give a unit cost, for their listing did not include the costs of delivery, time of the branch librarian making the request, nor the time of other central library departments who may have assisted in procuring the requested title.

The research librarians, however, from time to time have become very disturbed by the mounting costs of the lending service to libraries and individuals who do not contribute to their budgets. During the depression years the University of California Library at Berkeley assessed a service charge for each transaction sent to a library within the Far West. This was discontinued in 1946 when it was realized that the amount collected did not justify the bookkeeping costs nor the expense for research borne by the faculties of small colleges whose libraries could not afford to buy needed research materials nor pay the interlibrary loan service charges for them. In 1948 Ruth Harry and Harald Ostvold<sup>33</sup> of Washington University at St. Louis, concerned over the rising costs of interlibrary loan service, made a survey of other libraries to see how this was being handled elsewhere. Their findings were largely inconclusive but did show definite opposition to a service charge against the borrowing library. Harvard University Library<sup>34</sup> later brought the question up at meetings of the Association of Research Libraries in a discussion of the fee that they charge for non-university users of their library. Charles David,<sup>35</sup> librarian at that time of the University of Pennsylvania, in a paper presented in June 1949 at an A.C.R.L. College Section meeting asked for an investigation of interlibrary loan procedures in order to "make [the] service faster and less expensive." It was in answer to this mounting pressure for either charging fees or cutting costs that the A.C.R.L. Interlibrary Loan Committee was asked to investigate methods of reducing the cost of interlibrary lending, which investigation resulted in the present widely used interlibrary loan form and the 1952 General Interlibrary Loan Code.

Varying estimates appear in library literature regarding the cost of interlibrary loan service. Most of them were made before the national use and acceptance of the A.L.A. Interlibrary Loan Form and the 1952 Code. Furthermore, a figure given in dollars and cents has little validity in the present spiral of rising costs and increasing salaries. Transportation costs, however, are an out-of-pocket charge that can be easily determined and therefore most lending libraries request reimbursement for them, as specified in Section VI of the 1952 General Interlibrary Loan Code.<sup>36</sup> One might make a very rough estimate of the over-all costs in interlibrary loan service of

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personnel and materials (forms and wrapping supplies included) without consideration for overhead costs, by saying that the cost of lending is about half that of the borrowing side, providing the A.L.A. Interlibrary Loan Forms are used; and these personnel and materials costs per item are from five to ten times the transportation costs.

The cost of interlibrary loan service is of course considerably increased if the library utilizes teletype service, as do the campuses of the University of California among each other and to eastern libraries having installations. But, since it is a cost borne by the borrowing library even to the extent of asking the lending library to answer by TWX-Collect, it can be just referred to here as a utilization of a rather costly means of communication in order to give faster service to ones clientele. Teletype service has been, however, the basis of the fast and successful contractual service for interlibrary loans between the public libraries of Racine and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, referred to by them as Racmil;<sup>37</sup> and it is one of the services installed by the Midwest Interlibrary Center<sup>38</sup> to communicate with its member libraries, although several of the latter have dropped within the past year their installations due to increased cost and insufficient usage.

At present the trend of libraries in this country is toward more cooperative acquisition programs based on subject specialization and responsibility and toward less duplication in little used materials. The success of such programs is predicated upon well organized interlibrary loan service or comparatively inexpensive photographic reproduction. The cooperating libraries still recognize that the needs of their primary clientele must be served first but now see that by cooperative agreements they are making available more research materials for their clientele. Conflicts of usage can be handled by the photographic reproductions.

At the same time that this inter-library loan service is becoming less an exception and more of a necessity for research needs the intra-library service is also increasing. With the passage by the second session of the Eighty-Fourth Congress of the Library Services Act the goal of supplying library materials to every citizen is nearer accomplishment. More and more, the library resources of this country and Canada are being considered as one great reservoir that should be able to supply according to need, and through some form of inter- or intra- library loan, library materials to every potential reader.

Libraries are also establishing interlibrary loan arrangements with libraries abroad. The A.C.R.L. Committee on Interlibrary Loans has been working for over a year on a procedure for integrating the re-

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quirements of the 1952 General Interlibrary Loan Code with the International Federation of Library Associations' International Interlibrary Loan Regulations,<sup>39</sup> adopted at Zagreb in 1954. The Committee<sup>40</sup> has consulted those libraries most heavily represented in our National Union Catalog for an expression of their willingness to co-operate in lending, as well as borrowing, abroad and from these replies is now developing an international interlibrary loan procedure, which will be presented to the A.C.R.L. for official action. Thus interlibrary lending has moved from the occasional loan to a library that was well known to a potential world wide service to provide needed research materials to scholars as well as the less erudite materials for readers everywhere.

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## Departmentalization and Circulation Work: Problems and Relationships

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**CIRCULATION WORK** in the majority of libraries today is conducted within a physical and organizational framework differing markedly from that of only a few decades ago. The growth of departmentalization, with its division and dispersal throughout the library building of both book resources and public services, has created new relationships which involve circulation work at many points. The resulting problems have not always been solved—or fully recognized—and no survey of the various aspects of circulation work would be complete without some consideration of these matters. Other applications of the principle of the division of labor have been made by libraries, notably in such volume operations as book delivery and charging, with a resultant emphasis on the use of clerical assistance and an increasing reliance on simple mechanization. These changes too have introduced problems affecting circulation work which deserve description and discussion. It is the purpose of this article, therefore, to describe briefly the present pattern of service within the library, to identify some of the problems growing out of the changes mentioned, and to discuss the methods of dealing with them.

Both public and academic libraries have been affected by these changes in organization and method, but individual libraries of both types may differ considerably in the degree to which they have become departmentalized or have adopted labor-saving devices and in the extent to which they have succeeded in compensating for the resulting problems. To treat separately of the several kinds of libraries and the varying degrees of departmentalization would make these remarks unbearably lengthy and complex. What follows, then, is a general statement of general trends and problems. Because it is general and therefore over-simplified it will inevitably seem to exag-

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gerate both the extent and the effect of departmentalization and the other innovations. Concerning this defect it can only be said that the conditions and problems described are characteristic of many large public and academic libraries and of numerous smaller institutions, that each reader will have to reject what is not applicable to a particular situation, and that since libraries generally are growing and expanding rapidly even the extreme problems cited quite probably have potential if not immediate relevance to all but the smallest institutions. As a concluding note to this introductory statement, it may be mentioned that the reader will find here no precise definition of the term "circulation work." The delivery and charging of books occurs at many points in the modern library building. Wherever it occurs, other activities also occur or should occur. It is a thesis of this article that in many circumstances many of these activities constitute part of the circulation function.

It seems safe to say that throughout the centuries the most active single influence shaping library service has been growth. Certainly in the last thirty or forty years most of the changes libraries have made have been necessitated by growth in the numbers of books in their bookstacks, in the bulk and variety of printed materials in which man's knowledge is recorded, and in the number of persons using libraries. In adjusting both to the physical problem of handling a vastly increased bookstock and the intellectual problem of acquiring and making available a knowledge of what is in books (books both in the library and not in the library), libraries have followed a common pattern. First, the library added staff. Having increased staff, it divided labor. As more staff members were added the library departmentalized, first by separating the public services from the processing activities—a functional division. With continued growth libraries continued to departmentalize, but in several different ways. In the processing division, the work continued to be divided according to function performed—acquisitions, cataloging, binding and labeling, etc. In the services division too, function provided the basis for the next steps in departmentalization: reference service was split off from circulation service, and in some cases shelf work also was assigned to a separate department.

In the public library, after this point had been reached, further departmentalization occurred not by function but by age group (separate juvenile or adult departments), or by form of material handled (periodical rooms, documents rooms, map collections). Finally, in addition to and supplementing the already-existing units, subject de-

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partments were established. Usually music and the fine arts came first, and next, perhaps, business and economics, with special services to the business community; or a teacher's room, or a science and technology department. In the late 1920's and early 1930's this gradual evolution of departmentalization received both sanction and new impetus when three large public libraries erected new buildings planned to implement the concept of almost complete subject departmentalization, in broad classes, of all library materials regardless of form, circulation restrictions or function (Cleveland, 1925; Los Angeles, 1926; Baltimore, 1932).<sup>1, 2</sup>

In the case of academic libraries, problems of growth forced the general library of the college or university to departmentalize by function in much the same way that public libraries did. But with respect to subject departmentalization the historical picture is more complicated. On many campuses there existed a cluster of collegiate and departmental libraries which typically were independent of (and which in some cases antedated) the general library. In many such cases the stresses of growth, made greater by lack of adequate financial support for the departmental units, tended to force some of the departmental collections into the general library—usually at a time when the latter acquired a large new building with ample expansion space.<sup>3</sup> Thus, under certain circumstances growth caused a consolidation rather than a fragmentation of resources. In general, however, whatever consolidation occurred was more than matched by a trend toward increasing departmentalization which was not to be slowed until, in quite recent years, the divisional plan of organization was introduced. The university library acquired some departments by the extension of administrative control over existing, once autonomous units; others it created itself, usually to support the work of new academic departments offering instruction and conducting research in fields and disciplines new to knowledge or new to the particular institution. Moreover, in recent years academic libraries, in establishing undergraduate libraries, have utilized (much later than the public library) departmentalization by age group. But whatever the path to departmentalization, the academic library today is, like its public counterpart, highly departmentalized.

In thus specializing and departmentalizing its operations, the library made the classic response of all organized human endeavor to problems of growth and size. For the last twenty-five years it has also employed a steadily increasing number of other responses designed to enable it to handle efficiently a rapidly growing body of materials

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and a constantly heavier service load. It has attempted to simplify operations through such devices as brief cataloging, the employment of vertical files for handling ephemeral material, and the transfer to the reader of some of the burden of making out charging records. It has sought to combine operations, for example, by utilizing for authority in cataloging a title, the information gained in searching the title prior to ordering it, by producing both book cards and catalog cards at the same printing, etc. It has eliminated operations by abolishing accession numbers and double and triple charging records, and by throwing the bookstacks open to the readers, thus reducing or eliminating the paging of books. It has reaped another advantage of the specialization and division of labor by breaking down some library tasks into several basic parts, each of which can be rapidly handled by easily-trained, relatively inexpensive clerical assistants. Finally, it has introduced mechanical devices to handle repetitive or large-volume routine operations (charging machines, mechanical sorters or collators, and Photoclerk cameras).

The total impact on public service of all these labor-saving and organizational changes has been substantial. The effect can be illustrated by contrasting "circulation work" as it once was understood with the pattern of public service in the typical library today.

In the majority of libraries forty or fifty years ago, and even as recently as the early 1930's,<sup>4,5</sup> "circulation work" or "loan work" meant not only placing a desired book in the hands of the reader and making the necessary records, but also recommending the book itself or helping the reader to decide what books it was he wanted. It meant the handling of information and reference questions, instruction in the use of the library, and the stimulation of reading, and it included the conduct of what later became known as a "readers' advisory service." It signified, in short, all the activities that took place at the service desk of the one-man library, or of the somewhat larger library that had not yet departmentalized beyond the point of separating its processing and its circulation operations. Frequently the person who handed the reader a book across the circulation desk had selected the book for purchase, had read it, and was prepared to discuss its qualities with the borrower.

Today, in all but the smallest libraries, these same services have been assigned to several, perhaps many, departments. Where once the reader found all his problems handled at the same spot, today's inquirer at the charging desk will find himself referred to some other department of the library or, since there is at least a fair chance that

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any particular question or interest may cut across subject disciplines and the arbitrary subject arrangements of the library, he may well find himself visiting several departments before his needs are satisfied. Again, the materials he desires may be held only in microfacsimile, which perhaps means a trip to another special department; or they may be in a storage collection, which requires negotiating for their retrieval and probably a wait of a day or two. If he is referred to the card catalog, he may run into some puzzling example of brief cataloging or some esoteric symbols indicating location, or he may find that certain analytical entries that would have been helpful to him have not been made—all circumstances which will leave him with problems that can be cleared up only through consultation with a staff member. Even that much-advertised boon to the library user, the open bookstack, poses problems for the modern reader, although he may not be aware of them. Any librarian experienced in reference work knows what oblique approaches the reader often takes to his problems, and how difficult it is for him to clarify in his own mind the precise nature of his interest. It seems a fair assumption that many a reader enters the bookstack with the same vague conception of what he wants, and one may ask how successful he is likely to be without human assistance—and how likely it is that he will attempt to seek out such assistance.

It may be argued that the preceding paragraph has overstated the difficulties of using the present-day library. It seems at least equally possible that it has understated them, for only some of the more obvious problems are touched upon. In either case the essential point cannot be denied, and that is, that as a consequence of departmentalization and the library's other quite commendable gestures toward greater efficiency of operation, the library has become a far more complex tool to use, and therefore the dependence of the reader upon human guidance has been considerably increased.

This being the case, it is unfortunate that these same changes in library service have had the effect of making it more difficult for the reader to have access to human guidance, and more difficult for the library to provide full and accurate assistance. The general circulation or charging counter, which in most libraries remains a major point of public contact, in many cases has been stripped of all functions save those associated with the delivery and charging of books. Here, the reader finds that "circulation work" has come to signify, in the strict contemporary definition of the term, those library operations that take place after the patron knows the specific title he wants and

either requests it at the delivery desk or procures it himself from the shelves and brings it to the desk for charging. The activities are limited to handing the book to the reader, making and clearing the charging records, and performing whatever bookkeeping and notification operations are necessary to secure the return of overdue books and assess overdue and lost book charges. The desk is staffed almost entirely by clerical personnel, and their labors are aided by charging machines and other mechanical devices. The atmosphere is business-like and impersonal, and general questions are discouraged—either unconsciously because of the climate itself, or deliberately because the clerical staff is not equipped to answer general questions and the library has established other information sources for that purpose.

Two circumstances make this an unsatisfactory situation. The first is that the library reader persists in bringing up and discussing a variety of matters with the staff member who hands him his books or charges them. And the second is that the reader tends to be resistant to suggestions that he take his problems elsewhere in the library, even when the clerical assistant correctly perceives and comprehends the reader's problem and then knows precisely where to send him. More frequently than we are ready to admit the result is that the reader's problem remains unsolved, or the suggestion he has for the library remains unrecorded and unacted upon. It may be pointed out, in passing, that the library as a consequence of its own organization actually strengthens and encourages both of these reader attitudes. Typically, when subject departmentalization occurs in a library, not only books, but circulation and reference and bibliographical functions as well are transferred to the new units, which thereafter offer all these services in addition to the availability of a specialized book collection. The old, all-embracing conception of circulation work therefore flourishes at such desks, under the same roof that also houses a stripped-down, mechanized, clerically-staffed general circulation or charging desk. The reader is used to receiving full library service at such desks, and he naturally tends to expect the same service and the same opportunities to discuss problems and exchange viewpoints at every desk in the library.

But if the inaccessibility of qualified assistance is a deficiency of the contemporary general circulation desk, a possible deficiency of the departmental circulation desk is the inability of its staff to give complete and accurate information about the resources and services available in other subject or general departments of the library. Even if there is a general reference department or a general information desk

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staffed by a knowledgeable professional, readers will ask a great variety of questions at the departmental desks. Frequently they do not get the proper answers. In part this is because many departmental desks also are manned for a large part of the time by clerical assistants. In part it is because the busy professional librarians staffing the department do not have the time, and frequently have not been given the means, to inform themselves in sufficient detail of the resources of the library as a whole.

By way of summary then, and with the caveat that no generalization can have full applicability to all situations, it can be said that the larger public and academic libraries present library users with a number of obstacles to effective use of the library—obstacles which the library must perceive and take steps to remove. These obstacles include the dispersion of resources throughout the building, the arbitrary and always somewhat unsatisfactory division of the book collections, the location of some volumes in depositories of little-used materials, diminished cataloging control of the total resources of the library, the prevalence of various self-service devices coupled with a reduced provision of professional assistance, an impersonalized and mechanized main charging desk, and the use of clerical help to the exclusion of professional staff at major points of public contact. The library, in short, has been made a more complex tool for the reader to use, but the availability of assistance in its use has diminished, and the staff members who are available may not have the desirable range of knowledge of the library's resources outside of their own department.

In turning to a consideration of the steps that libraries take or may take to eliminate those obstacles or reduce their importance, the librarian is immediately confronted with the realization that if departmentalization and the specialization of labor have made the library a more complex and cumbersome instrument for the library user, they have also made the library a far more complex instrument for the library staff itself to manage. The pattern of service in the modern library represents a fragmentation of an operation once performed in its entirety by one person or one department. The unity of the larger operation has thus been destroyed, and somehow the library must restore that unity so that the organization may achieve its service goal. Basic to the achievement of unified service is a smoothly-working system of interdepartmental relationships, but such a system does not exist and function automatically. Rather, it must be established and encouraged, and must also be continuously adjusted and supervised,

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either by the department heads themselves or by a coordinating officer.

The administrative difficulties involved in controlling the complexities introduced by departmentalization have not been generally recognized. The chief librarian sees that when he expands the number of his departments from four to five, he increases his direct relationships with department heads by one person. He is likely not to recognize that by this same simple action he has increased the number of possible combinations of departmental group and cross relationships (quite apart from any relationships he has with the departments) from the existing forty to an impressive ninety-five. This rapid multiplication of group relationships results from the fact, as Graicunas has pointed out,<sup>6</sup> that such relationships increase at an exponential rather than a direct rate when a new supervisor (or department) is added to the organizational structure. Thus, if our chief librarian should later be led to organize his library into twelve processing and service departments, the number of possible group and cross relationships among the heads of these departments would reach the astounding total of 24,696!

It must be conceded at once that in practice the number of active relationships in both the five-department and the twelve-department library will be much smaller than the maximum figures given above. The number is diminished considerably by the fact that the work of some departments does not often impinge upon the work of the other departments. It is diminished still further because some departments perform routine work, which necessitates fewer and simpler relationships with other departments. Finally, the number is decreased wherever departmental relationships are not technical or functional in character. Despite these abridging factors, however, a substantial number of new relationships are created whenever departmentalization expands, and as E. A. Wight has mentioned, "The working out of this principle undoubtedly explains much of the necessity, as well as the difficulty, of effecting coordination in a large . . . library."<sup>7</sup>

The importance of this problem can be indicated by glancing briefly at some of the many "circulation" activities which depend upon smooth interdepartmental relationships for proper handling.

There are first of all the matters which relate to the work of the preparations departments. There are binding problems, which range all the way from making certain that the circulation assistants cull out books in need of binding, through the determination of whether the book should be given "rush" treatment or can safely be put in the "deferred" category, to problems of working out departmental binding

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quotas and scheduling the sending of materials to the binding department. These are relatively simple problems, but they may involve training to the same standard a dozen or more assistants in as many departments and coordinating the flow of bindery books from those same departments to a central point where they must be handled efficiently and without undue delay. There are problems associated with the inventory, typically conducted by or with the assistance of the circulation staff, which again require library-wide coordination to see that a detailed procedure is consistently observed throughout the system and that the separate departmental inventories are timed and spaced so that the inevitable flood of withdrawals and catalog and shelf list corrections does not swamp the cataloging department. There are decisions, usually involving several service and processing departments, concerning what analytics should be made or discontinued, or what cataloging provision is to be made for reprint series in microfacsimile, or what treatment should be given other special materials. All these are matters in which the circulation staff has an interest. Finally, there are also a host of such minor but nevertheless potentially confusing matters as the clearance of records for lost books, the need to rush the cataloging of badly-needed volumes, the establishment of uniform and library-wide tracing and replacement operations, etc.

A second group of activities includes those, already dealt with at some length, that may be described as shared responsibilities for reader aid. A reader presents a problem to a staff member, and three things must happen: (1) the staff member must comprehend the problem; (2) he must refer the reader to the one place and the one person best able to handle the problem; and (3) the reader must be given the best answer the library's resources afford. The successful accomplishment of these three steps depends heavily upon the existence and correct functioning of a system of interdepartmental relationships. The third step especially is possible of accomplishment only if the operations of the several departments have been thoroughly correlated in all their aspects—from the making of the decision as to which department shall develop what subjects, and which department shall house and service each title claimed by more than one department, to the assignment of service responsibilities in such a way that no needed and legitimate service is overlooked, and to the development of a spirit of service that will subordinate individual and departmental whim or convenience to the best interest of the library user.

There is a third category of reader-library contacts which thus far

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has only been glanced at, but which is of great importance to the library—the contacts during which the library learns something from its patrons. Staff members handling circulation work, whether in the general circulation or the subject departments, are perhaps in a better position than any other class of staff member to hear of the inadequacies of the library's resources and services. In the area of book resources, they regularly hear comments covering the whole range of unfulfilled desires—from the lack of a specific title to the weakness of the collection in an entire subject area. In the matter of meeting demands for titles enjoying great popularity, only they, in both academic and public libraries, have the contacts with the public which enable them to estimate demand for particular volumes or for books on particular topics, and to act in such a way that these demands are met, either through the duplication of copies or by placing the title in a reserve circulation category. In public libraries staff members are in a position to note the development of new interests on the part of the library's public, whether this is a common and widespread though unorganized interest, or whether it is stimulated by a new program sponsored by some social group or adult education agency. In an academic library setting, so frequently characterized by poor faculty-library communication, it may be the circulation assistant who first becomes aware of new teaching emphases or research projects which may have an effect on the library's service or acquisition program. It is at the circulation desk, central or departmental, that complaints about service are most frequently heard or overheard, and it is here too, that the unvoiced difficulties the reader experiences in using a highly-departmentalized library system may be observed, noted, and if properly handled, made a subject of investigation and an object of correction. All such information can be successfully channeled to the persons in a position to act upon them, and can then be acted upon, only if the library has a carefully coordinated and supervised system of interdepartmental relationships.

Granted the importance of active and smoothly-functioning internal relationships, what are the means available to achieve the desired unity of effort? There are many, and many of them are widely employed. Basic to all the others, however, and sometimes overlooked, is the provision of coordinating officers who will make certain that the other devices which promote the exchange of information and the integrated functioning of the whole library are actually utilized.

In this area, existing deficiencies are likely to be of several kinds. Frequently not enough "middle management" officers have been intro-

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duced into the organization to make manageable the hundreds or thousands of relationships that exist in a large enterprise. The largest workable span of control is hard to determine, particularly in libraries, but if the span is too great important matters may be overlooked or fail of action. There are a large number of university library public service divisions having fifteen or twenty or more departments ranged under one divisional chief or coordinating officer, but which nevertheless function with relative success, largely because of the similarity of problems faced by the departments and the absence of any large number of directly impinging group or cross relationships. But even in these apparently successful operations it is probable that the reader relationships described in the earlier parts of this article are not adequately provided for, that staff knowledge of the library's total resources leaves much to be desired, and that important matters are not acted upon.

In other public and university libraries which have only lately reached substantial size and a high degree of departmentalization, all department heads, both processing and service, report directly to the chief librarian. These libraries tend to exhibit two common characteristics first, the chief librarian almost without exception has more responsibilities that he can do justice to; and second, because he cannot possibly find time to devote to the necessary coordinating activities, the individual department heads tend to conduct their operations in a way that will enhance their own prestige, or the resources of their department, at the expense of the over-all effort of the library. In such organizations, the interposition of a coordinating officer, either line or staff, with the primary task of unifying and integrating the service effort of the library, would help to achieve unity not only through the direct actions of the officer, but also because the very presence of such an officer places a premium on cooperative rather than individual effort. The degree to which public libraries have recognized these problems and provided for the coordinating function is to some extent indicated in the already-mentioned survey published in 1952 by Wight.<sup>7</sup>

Given the necessary coordination, other devices may be successfully employed. Some of these take the form of written statements brought to the attention of all members of the staff both by direct distribution and by posting. These are of two major types, both of which are necessary: general announcements describing staff changes, special bibliographical and other services, hours of service, etc.; and printed procedures, jointly prepared where desirable, which outline both the

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policies and the routines of the library. Some libraries have a carefully-planned system of staff meetings, not just of division heads meeting together, and department heads meeting together, but also of meetings of the staff members of the individual departments wherever the departmental staff is large enough to benefit through such meetings. Communication upward, from the newest page to the chief librarian, is of course as important as communication downward through the same range. Other devices include the preparation and distribution to the staff of descriptions of the holdings and the services of the special collections and departments within the library, the routing of departmental reports, and a regularized program for the exchange of personnel among departments.

One final word may be said concerning the task of making it both possible and easy for the reader and the library to establish the necessary communication. Only a limited answer is to be found in the physical devices now in use. Some libraries have trained the members of the circulation staff to refer readers to the reference department or a particular subject department. Others place an information desk near the circulation counter and the public catalog so that patrons may be referred or find their own way there. Most libraries provide one or more professional librarians behind the circulation desk to whom the patron is expected to address his problems and suggestions. All these devices are effective to a degree—when the information desk is staffed (and even in well-run libraries it often is not), when the reference assistants are not busy with other patrons and problems, or when the professional behind the circulation counter is not engrossed in setting up tomorrow's schedule or deeply involved in settling a dispute about a lost or overdue book. Under such circumstances the necessary wait, or the required trip to another desk or another room, may be fatal to the reader's interest.

Furthermore the library, by the mere provision of information desks, can never fully benefit from situations in which it may learn something from the reader. The reader's needs have to be surmised more often than they are explicitly stated; his difficulties may more often be observed by a staff member than they are voiced by the patron; the indications are subtle and fleeting, and they must therefore be watched for, perceived, and then acted upon. Such delicate and evanescent attempts at communication will be overlooked unless the staff members dealing with the public at every circulation point are alert enough to catch them, informed enough to know what to do about them, and responsible enough to take the necessary action.

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Current trends in librarianship seem likely to intensify all the problems discussed in these remarks. The continuing growth of book collections and of knowledge itself will place a greater premium on the bibliographical services of the subject-specialist librarians, who therefore will be more and more often relieved of the "clerical" responsibilities of desk service. As a consequence, a still greater concentration of clerical personnel will occur at these service points. This pattern will be reinforced as more university libraries organize service on a divisional basis, because such service units inevitably are larger than departmental units. The tendency will be to staff with clerical personnel at the charge-out points, and to remove the professional staff a small but significant distance from the firing line. One suspects that the public library too will in the future order its materials in very broad divisions rather than in numerous small departments, and that the same growth in clerical staffing at circulation points will occur. At the same time other factors will continue to increase the reader's dependence upon human guidance. Mechanization and the use of microfacsimile will continue to grow. So will the trend toward the segregation of less-used materials in storage libraries—a trend that will increasingly pose problems of selection, cooperation, and service for the circulation as well as the reference personnel of the library. Even the approaches to teaching and to research are changing in ways that will demand more personal attention by the librarian. College instruction, which has progressed from the lecture method, to the use of the single text, to reliance on many texts, has already shifted to the requirement of independent work from students, many of whom are studying under custom-made programs. Research itself, in some areas of knowledge, has shifted or is shifting from a subject to a regional approach, and in almost all disciplines research more and more often cuts across a number of the conventional fields of knowledge rather than concentrating in one. This will continue, and as it develops the library's arbitrary divisions by subject will not only have less meaning than they now do, but will also present increasing difficulties for the reader except as the service staff is able to provide the integrating touch.

The four important desiderata, therefore, both now and for the future, are these: first, the library's administrative staff must recognize that reader-library relationships of all varieties, vital as well as trivial, exist or try to come into being at all circulation points; second, conditions favorable to the encouragement and reception of such matters must be created; third, effective channels for both communication

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and action must be provided so that the entire staff can be informed about the library, the suggestions and problems of the reader can be transmitted to the proper staff member, and effective action can be taken; fourth, the supervisory organization of the library must be such that all these matters can be adequately and continuously provided for. If we now, in concluding, seem to be talking about the library's administration rather than about the problems involved in circulation work, it is because the responsibility for the recognition and solution of these circulation problems lies with the administrative officers.

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## *Library Trends*

Forthcoming numbers are as follows:

October, 1957, *Research in Librarianship*. Edited by Association of American Library Schools Committee on Research.

January, 1958, *Library Cooperation*. Editor: Ralph T. Esterquest, Director, Midwest Inter-Library Center.

April, 1958, *Legal Aspects of Library Administration*. Editor: John B. Kaiser, Director, Newark Public Library.

July, 1958, *Trends in American Book Publishing*. Editor: Frank L. Schick, Assistant Librarian, Wayne State University.

The numbers of LIBRARY TRENDS issued prior to the present one dealt successively with college and university libraries, special libraries, school libraries, public libraries, libraries of the United States government, cataloging and classification, scientific management in libraries, the availability of library research materials, personnel administration, services to readers, library associations in the United States and British Commonwealth, acquisitions, national libraries, special materials and services, conservation of library materials, state and provincial libraries in the United States and Canada, American books abroad, mechanization in libraries, and rare book libraries and collections.

